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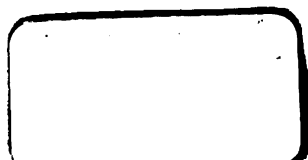


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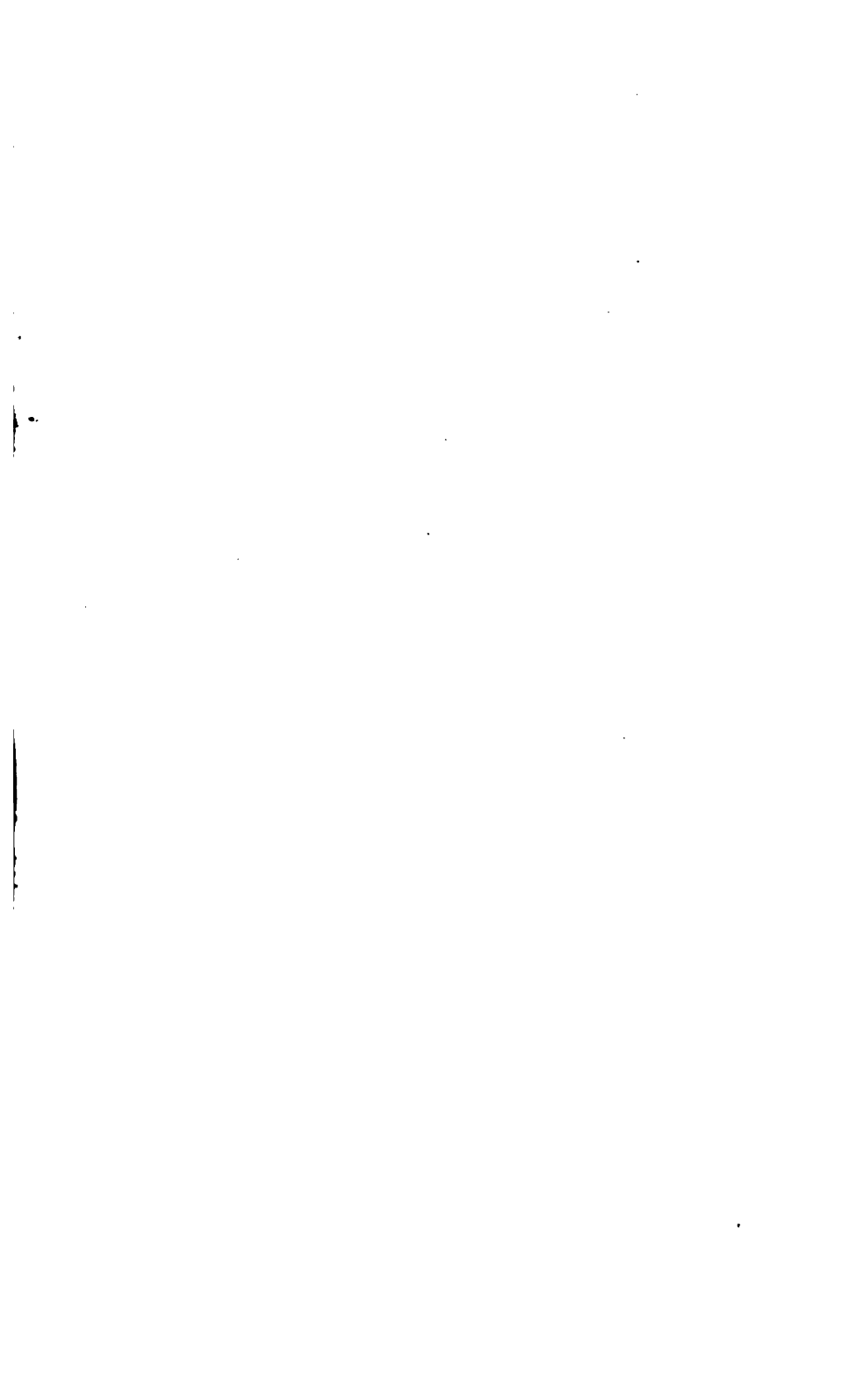
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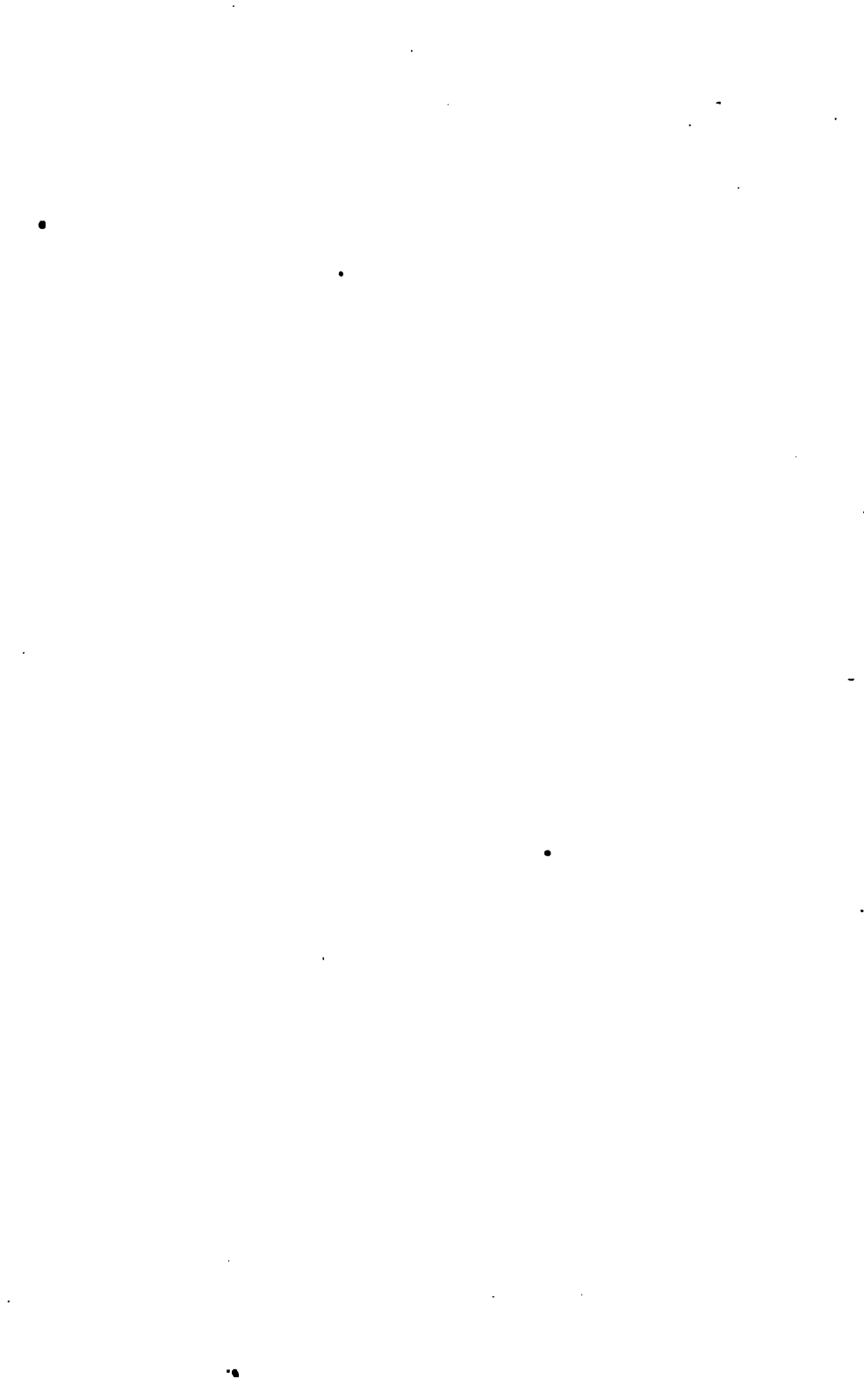
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# HISTORY

OF THE

## SECESSION CHURCH.

BY THE  
REV. JOHN M'KERROW,

BRIDGE OF TEITH.

*Revised and Enlarged Edition.*

GLASGOW:  
A. FULLARTON AND CO., 110, BRUNSWICK STREET;  
5, NICOLSON STREET, EDINBURGH; AND  
12, KING'S SQUARE, GOSWELL STREET ROAD, LONDON.

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1841.





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GLASGOW:  
FULLARTON AND CO., PRINTERS, VILLAFIELD.

## RECOMMENDATION.

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THE HISTORY of the SECESSION CHURCH, by the Rev. JOHN M'KERROW (of which a new edition is now called for), has, we are aware, been the fruit of much research, as well as of the study of several years ;—is greatly approved of by those who are best acquainted with the facts of which it treats ;—and we have full freedom in recommending it to the attention of the Public, and the perusal of Members of our Church, as an able, impartial, and interesting account of the affairs which it professes to narrate.

JAMES PEDDIE, D.D.  
JOHN MITCHELL, D.D.  
JOHN BROWN, D.D.  
DONALD FRASER, D.D



## ADVERTISEMENT.

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**THE Church of the Secession has now existed for upwards of a hundred years, increasing gradually in extent and influence. The original congregations were only four.—The United Associate Church alone, at the present time, numbers well nigh four hundred congregations ;—has about eighty preachers, labouring in stations, or constantly pervading the country in all directions, to proclaim the word of life, and inculcate the duties of holiness ;—and, while she aids, with funds or with agents, not a few Missionary Societies, at home or abroad, in their labours of love for the good of mankind, and is connected with various congregations or churches, which have sprung from the Secession, in Ireland, in the United States, and in Nova Scotia, she has also Missionaries and Congregations of her own in Canada and the West Indies, founded by her exertions, and sustained by her supplies.**

That such a body,—while her congregations are supported solely by the contributions of their members, profess evangelical sentiments, promote the principles of ecclesiastical purity, and exercise the rights of popular election,—must exert, upon the community at large, an influence deeply interesting, and extensively powerful, is not to be denied. Nor can it fail to be manifest, that the state, the spirit, the operations of such a large and increasing Association should present an object of enlightened curiosity to every inquisitive mind, as well as of deep interest to every lover of gospel-truth, and to every friend of religious liberty. And, we apprehend, it may be affirmed

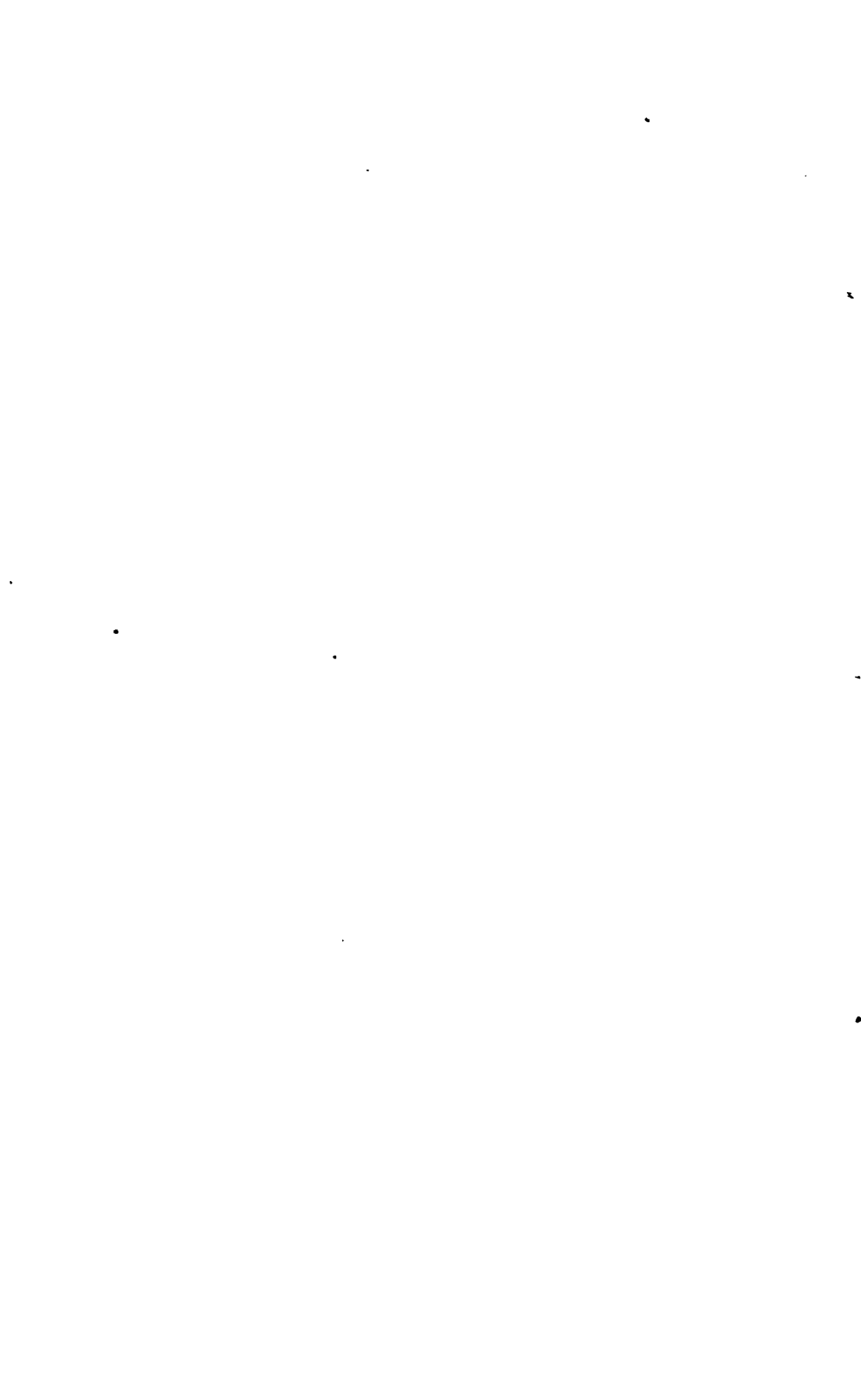
without presumption, that even the Politician and the Legislator cannot fulfil his duty to himself, or to his country, if he remains wholly ignorant of the rise, the progress, the constitution, and the administration of a Church (the Secession-Church), whose principles and efficiency cannot but enter, largely, into the elements of the national condition ; whose voice will be heard, in some measure, directly or indirectly, in the senate itself ; and whose bearing and biasses must go, in a considerable degree, to modify the laws of our country, and the character of its society.

Yet, for the last fifty years, no common or connected account of the affairs of the Secession has been presented to the general public ;—her statistics and transactions having been, for that long period, either shut up in the minutes of her courts, which are accessible to comparatively few ; or are to be gleaned from the perusal of scattered and fugitive Pamphlets and Magazines, which are not easily collected ; or to be learnt by correspondence with those, who have been conversant with her past affairs, and whose number is of course incessantly diminishing. A full, accurate, and impartial view of her history was therefore, on many accounts, to be greatly desired.

This desideratum the Rev. John M'Kerrow, an intelligent, talented, and very respectable minister of the Body, has supplied. With laborious assiduity, he has searched the records of the Secession,—perused those historical documents, which have been put forth by herself, from time to time, in her different branches ;—availed himself of such publications, on various subjects, controversial, doctrinal, or hortatory, as fall into the hands of few, but are necessary to give a complete and satisfactory view of her spirit and transactions ;—sought information from every person, and every quarter, whence it might be obtained,—and has now formed all into a continuous and interesting narrative, which has secured the approbation of those who are best acquainted with her annals, and which, it is hoped,

will be felt to be an object of curiosity, if not of partial favour, to every liberal mind. To the republication of the former account, he has added, (to complete the higher statistics of this religious community,) a new chapter connected with the literature of the Secession, which, it may be presumed, must augment the interest of the work ; may perhaps surprise some ; but will not fail to gratify the candid and philosophic of all ranks, by showing, that learning is not confined to any one class of society, or to any one section of the Christian Church.

GLASGOW: 110, BRUNSWICK STREET, }  
*January 1, 1841.*



## PREFACE TO THE FIRST EDITION.

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IN presenting this work to the public, the Author claims for it no merit except that of being a faithful record of the proceedings of that church whose history it professes to give. While the information which it contains will be chiefly valuable to the members of the Secession Church, there will be found embodied in it a variety of facts connected with the religious history of our country, which he flatters himself will not be altogether uninteresting to the general reader.

The Author has had unrestricted access, during the course of his labours, to the official records of the Secession Church; and, in giving an account of the proceedings of that church, he is not aware that he has made any statement which these records will not be found to verify. In noticing the transactions of other churches, he has had recourse to official documents, wherever he could find them; and, in the absence of these documents, he has gleaned his information from pamphlets which were published during the progress of the events that are detailed, and by individuals who had good opportunities of being acquainted with these events, on account of their being the chief actors in them. A manuscript, containing some account of the Secession, during the first years of its

existence, which Professor Brown of Haddington had commenced, but did not think proper to complete, was placed by the Professor's son, the late Rev. John Brown of Whitburn, at the Author's disposal; and to this manuscript he acknowledges himself indebted for several of the facts which he has stated concerning the early history of the Secession.

It is possible that, amid such a mass of facts and opinions, as are detailed in these volumes, many of which are placed on record for the first time, there may be some things that are incorrectly stated. The Author would consider himself guilty of presumption, were he to aver that, in recording what to him appeared to be matters of fact, he has committed no mistake. While he solicits from his readers credit for honesty of purpose, he puts in no claim to infallibility. He is not aware, however, that he has, in a single instance, been guilty of wilful misrepresentation, or that he has attempted to give a false colouring to particular events. Should any misstatement of facts be pointed out to him, either by friend or foe, he will gladly avail himself of the suggestion, and will take the first opportunity of correcting the mistake.

With regard to the *opinions* which he has expressed, concerning men and measures, these are his own. He holds himself responsible for them. He has ventured to give utterance to them, because he thinks they are right. He is willing, however, to retract or modify them, should any one convince him that they are wrong. He has no wish pertinaciously to adhere to any opinion, merely because he has once avowed it. He is willing to embrace truth, from whatever quarter it may come.

The Author is not so unreasonable as to expect that these volumes will please all parties. In the present divided state of public opinion, concerning the great questions which are agitating the country, different views will be entertained by different individuals; and according as these views coincide

with those which are expressed in this work, will the Author be approved of, or condemned. Some will find fault with him because he hath spoken too plainly. Others will grumble, because he hath not spoken plain enough : while there may be others, who, without having any particular fault to find with the Author himself, may make use of his production as a medium, through which to assail that religious party whom, in the present instance, he represents, and whom they consider it their duty to oppose on all occasions and by all means. In preparing this work for the press, the Author has counted the cost of these things. All that he asks is, candid and honourable treatment.

To those of his brethren, who returned answers to his circular concerning the statistics of the Secession, the Author tenders his grateful acknowledgments. He has been much encouraged in his labours, by the kind wishes which many of them have expressed for the success of his undertaking ; and should the work, which he now submits to their perusal, be deemed by them worthy of their approbation, he will consider himself amply repaid for the trouble which he has undergone in the preparation of it. He has only further to add, that the volumes have been composed at brief intervals of leisure, which have occurred, amid the almost incessant demands made upon his time and attention by the multifarious duties connected with the pastoral charge of a congregation scattered over an extensive district of country. He mentions this circumstance to account for the delay which has taken place in the publication, and also to bespeak the indulgence of his good-natured readers, should they now and then discover, in the course of the work, a repetition of the same sentiment, or a want of proper continuity in any part of the narrative.

In concluding this prefatory notice, the Author expresses his earnest desire that the History of the Secession, which is now submitted to the judgment of the public, may be ren-

dered subservient to the extension of Christ's spiritual kingdom in the world ; and that it may be instrumental in perpetuating to distant ages those benefits, which the inhabitants of our own and other lands have already derived from the existence of the Secession Church.

BRIDGE OF TEITH, *9th May*, 1839.

## PREFACE TO THE SECOND EDITION.

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THE author feels grateful for the reception which the Secession History has met with from his brethren in the ministry, and from that portion of the public for whose benefit it was specially intended, namely, the members of the Secession Church. The first edition was speedily sold off: and a new edition having been called for, he has thereby been furnished with an opportunity of correcting inaccuracies, and supplying omissions. He has given the whole work a careful revision, and has endeavoured to render it as accurate and complete, in every respect, as possible.

An increased value has been given to the work by adding to the new edition a Supplement of considerable extent. The supplemental part contains a full account of the literature of the Secession Church. It traces the progress of theological tuition in that church from its commencement till the present period. An account is given of the mode of tuition pursued by each of the professors who have filled, in succession, the theological chair; and of the various improvements that have been made, from time to time, in the course of study which the candidates for the office of the ministry, in connection with the Secession, have been required to pursue. Biographical notices are given of a considerable number of the deceased Secession authors, with a complete list of the works of each. The names of the living authors are also mentioned, and brief notices given of their productions.

Such an account as that which the Supplement contains, of the literature of the Secession, has been long felt to be a desideratum; and has been regarded as necessary in order to remove an erroneous impression which has existed in the minds of many, namely, that the education of the ministers of the Secession, in common with those of other dissenting

communities, is inferior to that of licentiates of the Established church. A perusal of the Supplement is fitted to remove this impression; and will show that, both in point of theological acquirements and of attainments in general literature, the former are in no respect inferior to the latter. Among the authors of the Secession Church—of whom a list is given in the Supplement—will be found the names of individuals who have rendered eminent service to the cause of literature and religion; and whose writings have procured for them a lasting and an honourable reputation among the admirers of piety and genius both in our own and other countries. In looking back upon the lives of these distinguished men, and in comparing the theological and literary productions that have issued from their pen, with those that have been given to the world by the ministers of other churches, the Secession has no reason to be ashamed.

After the friendly communications which have been received from so many quarters, expressing a favourable opinion of the merits of the Secession History,—of the accuracy of its statements, and of the spirit in which it has been written,—the Author commits, with increased confidence, this new edition to the judgment of the public. He dedicates his work anew to the service of the Saviour. He lays it at the foot of the Cross, as an humble offering to the cause of religion. And his earnest prayer is, that the perusal of it may, by the blessing of God, tend to foster in the bosom of the members of the Secession Church a spirit of piety, and may lead them to a more diligent improvement of those valuable privileges, which, as a religious community, they have long enjoyed.

BRIDGE-OF-TEITH, }  
11th Oct., 1841. }

# HISTORY OF THE SECESSION CHURCH.

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## INTRODUCTORY NARRATIVE.

Proceedings of the Scottish Parliament—First General Assembly after the Revolution—Imposition of oaths—Cameronians—Mr. John Hepburn—First process against Professor Simson—Condemnation of the Auchterarder Creed—The Marrow Controversy—Second process against Professor Simson—Law of Patronage—Discussions concerning it—Refusal of the Assembly to record dissents—Ecclesiastical Despotism.

To trace the rise and progress, to describe the present state, and to dwell upon the future prospects of the SECESSION CHURCH, are the objects which I propose in the present work. Since the memorable era of the Reformation, no event has taken place in our country which has been productive of such important consequences, in a religious point of view, as that which forms the subject of the present narrative. The effects, which have followed from it, have been far more extensive, and in every respect more important, than could possibly have been anticipated by the venerable men with whom the Secession originated, or by that church from which they felt themselves under the necessity of withdrawing. Before proceeding to detail the particulars of this memorable event, and the consequences that have resulted from it, I shall carry my readers backward to the beginning of the eighteenth century, and shall present them with a rapid glance of some of those circumstances connected with the state of the Scottish Church, immediately after the Revolution, which tended to alienate the minds of a large portion of the people from the ecclesiastical establishment of the country; and which, operating as so many predisposing causes, paved the way for a rapid, as well as an extensive revolt, so soon as the banner of the Secession was unfurled.

The first Scottish Parliament that met after the Revolution, declared prelacy to be "a great and insupportable grievance to this nation, and contrary to the inclination of the generality of the people ever since the Reformation;" and they forthwith abolished the same. In the second session of the same parliament, which met in 1690, the presbyterian form of church government was re-established, according to the ratification and establishment which had been given to it in 1592. This first act of the Scottish Parliament, in reference to the national church, was very unpalatable to many, and was condemned by them on the following grounds:—that it did not recognise what God had done for the Scottish Church during one of the brightest periods of her history, viz. that which elapsed from 1638 to 1650,—that it did not formally condemn and disannul the Act Recissory passed (1661) during the first parliament of Charles II.,—and that it did not in express terms declare prelacy to be contrary to the word of God, and abjured by the national covenants. That the act should adopt as its basis, for the re-establishment of the presbyterian government, what had been done in 1592, rather than what had been accomplished in 1638 and subsequent years, was considered as a decidedly retrograde movement in the work of reformation. Another unpopular act passed by this parliament was that which enjoined the oath of allegiance to be sworn "in place of any other oaths imposed by laws and acts of preceding parliaments." Though this act appeared to be framed with a view to the abolition of those oaths, which had been imposed during the period of the persecution, yet it was so worded as to include amongst the number of the oaths that were abolished, the oath of the covenant—and was obviously designed to open the door of admission to all classes of his majesty's subjects, into places of trust and power, whether they were favourers of the covenant or not. The passing of such an act could not but give grievous offence to all those (and the number was not small) who considered the covenant as the grand palladium of the liberties of their country. The disappointment, occasioned by the adopting of this measure, was the more severely felt, that the same parliament which sanctioned it, laid aside the draught of an act, after it had been twice read, which had been introduced avowedly for the purpose of excluding from places of public trust all who had taken any share in the oppressive measures of the bygone period.

The proceedings of the first General Assembly, held after the Revolution, appear in some respects not to have been more satisfactory than those of the parliament, to a considerable portion of the presbyterians. This Assembly, after a suspension of its meetings, for more than thirty years, sat down upon

the 16th of October 1690. Of the old presbyterian ministers who had been ejected at the Restoration, not more than sixty were now alive;\* and these men—who had themselves suffered so much for conscience' sake—rejoicing that their favourite form of church government was again restored, and influenced by an amiable and forgiving spirit, showed a much greater disposition to conciliate the episcopal clergy than to retaliate upon them the wrongs which they had received. The following declaration, made by their moderator, (Mr. Hugh Kennedy,) they adopted, and entered upon their record, "That it was not the mind of the Assembly to depose any incumbent simply for his judgment anent the government of the church, or to urge re-ordination upon any incumbent whatsoever." And in accordance with this declaration were the instructions which they gave to their Commission, "That they be very cautious of receiving informations against the late conformists; and that they proceed in the matter of censure very deliberately, so as none may have just cause to complain of their rigidity; and that they shall not proceed to censure but upon relevant libels and sufficient probation." Three ministers, viz. Messrs. Shields, Linning, and Boyd—who had previously belonged to the Society-men, or Cameronians, but who at this meeting had been received into the bosom of the church—gave in a paper enumerating certain grievances connected with the defections of the past and present times, which they wished the Assembly to redress. The consideration of this paper was referred to the committee of overtures, who, when they gave in their report, characterised it as containing "unseasonable and impracticable proposals, uncharitable and injurious reflections, tending rather to kindle contentions than to compose divisions."†

This spirit of lenity, which influenced the members of the present Assembly, and which disposed them in a great measure to overlook, if not altogether to bury in oblivion, the delinquencies with which many of the conforming clergy had been chargeable, displayed itself no less in the proceedings of some of the subsequent Assemblies: For in 1694, among other charges which the commission received from the Assembly, they were enjoined "to receive into ministerial communion such of the late conform ministers, as, having qualified themselves according to law, shall subscribe the Formula:" And that no violence might be done to their consciences by subscribing a presbyterian formula, it was so framed that it did not require them to acknowledge that presbyterian government is founded on the word of God, but only, "That the church

\* Appendix to Sir Henry Moncrieff Welwood's Life of Erskine, p. 420.

† Act 5th Assembly, 1690.

government, as now settled by law, is the only government of this church." By such measures as these, a wide door of admission into the national church was opened to men who had hitherto thrown all their influence into the scale of arbitrary power, and who, by the active part which they had taken in the persecutions carried on during the preceding reigns, had rendered themselves exceedingly odious in the eyes of the people. Not a few availed themselves of the opportunity which was thus presented, of keeping possession, upon such easy terms, of their livings: they abjured prelacy, at least in form, and became the avowed adherents of a system of church polity, which it had been the unremitting object of their past lives to extirpate. That the number of ministers received into the Establishment, in consequence of these measures, was not small, we learn from the following passage in an address presented by the commission to Queen Anne: "We cannot but lay before your Majesty this pregnant instance of our moderation, that, since our late happy establishment, there have been taken in, and continued, hundreds of dissenting (i. e. episcopal) ministers upon the easiest terms."\* By the too easy admission of such men† into the Church of Scotland, immediately after the Revolution, an injury was done to her character at the very outset, from which she did not speedily recover; and the groundwork was thus laid of that system of coercion and of mal-administration which drove, at no distant period, from her communion, multitudes of the best of her members.

By such proceedings, the Assembly subjected themselves to the charge of being too compliant with the wishes of those who were in power—of being favourers of erastianism—of renouncing their covenant engagements—and of causing the work of reformation, so auspiciously begun by their forefathers, to retrograde instead of advance. What was expected of them was, that they would have taken as their model, the Assembly which met in 1638—that, like the nobles and ministers of that reforming period, they would have asserted their independence as a spiritual court, and protested in decided terms against every attempt on the part of those in power to interfere with or control their proceedings—that they would have sisted at their bar, and deposed and excommunicated the bishops and

\* Act 10th Assembly, 1712.

† For a description of the characters of the men who were thus received into the church on such easy terms, I refer the reader to Burnet's History of his own times. That prelate says of them, "They were generally very mean and despicable in all respects. They were the worst preachers I ever heard. They were ignorant to a reproach. Many of them were openly vicious. They were a disgrace to their orders, and the sacred functions, and were indeed the dregs and refuse of the northern parts."—*Burnet*, vol. i. p. 158, folio edition.

others who had been the ringleaders in the past defections—and that they would at least have made the attempt to restore to their former ascendancy throughout the country, the covenants, which for some time past had been kept very much in the back ground. The reason assigned by their apologists, why such a course was not pursued by them, was, that they did not wish to run the risk, by taking too high ground, of involving the country in fresh troubles, and of weakening the hands of the new government to which they felt themselves so deeply indebted. Others, again, considered their not adopting such measures as a sure evidence of their indifference to the cause of God.

Another source of division, both amongst ministers and people, was the imposition of certain oaths by the government. The imposition of such oaths, as a qualification to sit in church courts, was considered by many as an unwarrantable encroachment upon the freedom of the Christian church, and as at variance with their Confession of Faith. Influenced by such conscientious scruples, not a few of the ministers refused to take the oaths. The ferment upon this subject rose to its greatest height toward the latter end of the reign of Queen Anne, when the oath of abjuration, which had previously been imposed on persons occupying places of civil trust, was enjoined to be taken by all ministers, whether belonging to the establishment or to dissenters. This oath was peculiarly offensive to the presbyterian clergy, on account of its reduplicating upon an act passed for settling the succession to the crown; which act required, that the person succeeding to the crown shall be of the communion of the Church of England; and shall maintain the English hierarchy as established by law. The oath of abjuration required the persons swearing it to maintain the succession *as limited* by this act; which clause was interpreted by the presbyterians as extending not only to the persons and families that were to succeed to the crown, but also to the conditions upon which the crown was to be held by them: and they considered it hard to be obliged to take an oath which, as to the spirit of it, was completely opposed to the oath of their covenants; the one oath requiring them to sanction a clause which expressly provided that the person occupying the throne shall be an episcopalian, and the other oath as expressly binding them to recognise no form of church government, either in king or subjects, except that of presbytery. Another objection to the oath was, that it contained in it certain equivocal expressions, which were interpreted by some as implying in them a recognition of the queen's supremacy in matters of religion: and in addition to all this, the person taking the oath was obliged to swear that he took it heartily

and cheerfully. Entertaining such views of the oath, and considering that it required from them an abandonment of principles which they had hitherto held sacred, many of the ministers positively refused to take it, and were prepared to surrender their livings rather than act in opposition to the dictates of their conscience. All, however, were not animated by the same spirit. A considerable class, consisting chiefly of those who for the sake of their livings had renounced episcopacy and connected themselves with the Established Church, were not so scrupulous about taking the oath. After some explanation of the doubtful clauses, by way of salvo to their conscience (and some of them did not even require this) they consented to take it. This diversity of sentiment amongst the ministers, produced a corresponding division among the people. The popular current ran in favour of those ministers who had shown their independence by refusing to take the oath. Many serious persons refused to hear, or to give any countenance to the ministrations of those who had yielded what they deemed a sinful compliance in this matter; and so high did the party feeling, engendered by this question, run, that the people would scarcely attend any sacramental occasion where such ministers were employed. This popular feeling was to a certain extent cherished by the ministers of the one class refusing, in many instances, to hold communion with those of the other.\* It ought to be recorded to the praise of Queen Anne's government, that they respected the conscientious scruples of the non-jurants, inasmuch as no molestation of any kind was given to those who refused to take the oath; and the Assembly, when they met, did all in their power to prevent the injurious effects which such a division threatened to produce within the church: they enjoined the ministers to exercise mutual forbearance, and to cultivate love and charity toward one another.†

Besides this division amongst both ministers and people, occasioned by the swearing of the abjuration oath, there existed at this time,—chiefly in the west and southern parts of Scotland,—a class of dissenters, known by the name of Society-men, or Cameronians. These were the descendants of that party of Covenanters, who carried their principles to their utmost length. They refused to join the communion of the Established Church, on account of its erastianism; and they professed to withdraw their subjection from the State, on account of its recognising a king and parliament who had

\* Brown's MS.

† The oath was afterwards modified in such a manner that the greater part of those who at first refused were brought to take it,—though some still continued to hold out against it.

not subscribed the covenants. At the head of this party was Mr. John Macmillan, minister of the gospel at Balmaghie. The Assembly commenced a process against him in 1704, and at length deposed him, on account of his anti-government principles, and on account of, what they deemed, certain irregularities connected with the exercise of his ministry. He submitted for some time to this sentence; but finding that he was not likely soon to be restored, he resumed his office, of his own accord, and continued preaching for a number of years; and though the principles which he and his party professed to hold, were such as, when carried to their utmost extent, could not be acted upon in the present state of society, yet there is reason to believe that his labours were useful to many in those wild and uncultivated districts where he chiefly itinerated.

There was another party who, as to religious opinion, occupied a middle station betwixt the Establishment and the followers of Mr. Macmillan. Conscientious scruples kept them from adhering to the former; and they were not sufficiently rigid in their sentiments to be admitted to the communion of the latter. The national church, according as it had been re-established at the Revolution, they considered as too erastian in its constitution. What they wanted was, that it should be altogether independent of any interference on the part of the State; that, in the holding of its assemblies, and in the management of its affairs, it should recognise no authority but that of the King of Zion. They objected to it on the ground of its being too much secularized, and of its not having carried the work of reformation to a sufficient length. At the same time, they did not (like the Society-men) carry their views so far as to disown, in civil matters, the authority of the ruling powers, on the ground that they had not covenanted. Mr. John Hepburn, minister of Urr, was for many years the head of this party. Any brief notices that have been transmitted to us of the history of this person, lead us to believe that he was a good man, full of zeal for his Master's service, and animated by the spirit of an apostle. The treatment which he received from the General Assembly, tended to spread the spirit of disaffection among the people. He was first suspended, and then deposed from the office of the ministry; and though the breach was at one time in a fair way of being healed, by the Commission, that met in 1707, agreeing to restore him, yet the Assembly of the following year refused to sanction this deed of their Commission. Mr. Hepburn continued to preach after this for a number of years; and the party that adhered to him was considerable, amongst whom were some of the

most serious persons in that part of the country where he laboured.

A train of events, which followed one another in rapid succession, excited a great ferment among the friends of the Scottish Church, and fairly marshalled upon opposite sides the leading men of her communion. The issue of some important causes, brought under the review of her judicatories, made it but too manifest that a spirit of error, or at least, of indifference to the truth, had pervaded her high places. Arminian and Pelagian sentiments met with defenders among her ministers, and the propagators of these tenets were most leniently dealt with; they were all but applauded, while the severest lash of ecclesiastical discipline was applied to those good men, who had the honesty and the courage to stand boldly forward and defend the insulted doctrines of free grace.

Mr. James Webster, one of the ministers of Edinburgh, having, in 1714, called the attention of the Assembly to certain reports, which were circulated concerning the teaching of error by Mr. John Simson, Professor of Divinity in the University of Glasgow, and considering that it was the duty of the Assembly to take cognizance of such matters, requested that they would institute an inquiry into the truth of these reports. This they declined doing; but appointed Mr. Webster, and all who might join along with him, to present a complaint against Mr. Simson, before the Presbytery of Glasgow, upon their own responsibility; at the same time intimating that all who did so would be held as libellers. Mr. Webster, accordingly, did libel Mr. Simson before the Presbytery; and Mr. Simson having, in his answers which he returned to the libel, stated propositions of a most erroneous kind, the whole matter was brought before the Assembly in 1715. A committee was appointed by them to take cognizance of the case, although the weight and responsibility of the prosecution were still continued upon Mr. Webster, as the accusing party. The process was not finished till the Assembly of 1717, when it was clearly established, from Mr. Simson's own answers, that, among other unscriptural opinions, he maintained the following:—"That, by the light of nature, and the works of creation and providence, God has given an obscure objective revelation of the gospel; and that it is probable none are excluded from the benefit of the remedy for sin provided by God, and published twice to the whole world, except those who, by their actual sin, exclude themselves, and slight and reject the clearer light of the gospel revealed to the church, or that obscure discovery and offer of grace made to all without the church; and that it

the heathen would, in sincerity and truth, and in the diligent use of means that providence lays to their hand, seek from God the knowledge of the way of reconciliation, necessary for their acceptable serving of him, and being saved by him, he would discover it to them:" "That there are means appointed of God for obtaining saving grace, which means, when diligently used with seriousness, sincerity, and faith of being heard, God has promised to bless with success; and the going about these means in the foresaid manner, is not above the reach of our natural ability and power:" "That it is inconsistent with the justice and goodness of God, to create a soul without any original righteousness, or any disposition to good; and that the souls of infants since the fall, as they came from the hands of their Creator, are as pure and holy as the souls of infants would have been created, supposing man had not fallen; and that they are created as pure and holy as Adam's was, except as to those qualifications and habits which he received, as being created in an adult state."\*

Notwithstanding that such sentiments as these—which are alike opposed to scripture and to the doctrine taught in the Confession of Faith—were openly avowed by Mr. Simson in his answers, yet the Assembly neither removed him from his important situation, as professor of divinity, nor inflicted any censure on him for having taught these opinions to the students; but they terminated the process, by giving the following deliverance on the subject, couched in as gentle terms as they could. By their act they find, "That he had vented some opinions not necessary to be taught in divinity, and that had given more occasion to strife than to the promoting of edification; and that he had used some expressions that bear, and are used by adversaries in, an unsound sense; and that he had adopted some hypotheses, different from what are commonly used among orthodox divines, that are not evidently founded on scripture, and tend to attribute too much to natural reason, and the power of corrupt nature; which undue advancement of reason and nature is always to the disparagement of revelation, and efficacious free grace: therefore, they prohibit and discharge the said Mr. Simson to use such expressions, or to teach, preach, or otherwise vent such opinions, propositions, or hypotheses, as aforesaid."

This same Assembly, which used such gentle language in expressing their disapprobation of the heresies of Mr. Simson, manifested a different spirit in the case of the Auchterarder Presbytery. This presbytery, with the view of checking

\* Answers to Mr. Webster's Libel.

the progress of Arminian sentiments, had drawn up certain propositions, to which they required an assent to be given by candidates for licence. One of these propositions was,—“I believe that it is not sound and orthodox to teach that we must forsake sin, in order to our coming to Christ, and instating us in covenant with God.” A Mr. Craig, being refused an extract of his licence by the presbytery, because he would not subscribe this proposition, brought the matter, by appeal, before the Assembly. This court expressed their abhorrence of the proposition as unsound; they further ordered the presbytery to give Mr. Craig an extract of his licence, and prohibited them from using all such expressions for the future. By this condemnation of the *Auchterarder Creed*, (as it was scoffingly termed,) the Assembly was considered as sanctioning the following doctrine,—that persons must save themselves from the love and power of sin, before they come to Christ; which is much the same as teaching that a person must cure himself of his disease, before he apply to the physician: whereas the Saviour says, ‘They that be whole need not a physician, but they that are sick.’

These proceedings of the Assembly were viewed with grief and alarm by a large portion of the population throughout the country. They were regarded as furnishing indications, on the part of the leading men in the church, that they had declined from the purity of the faith, and that they had become, if not the avowed champions of error, at least indifferent to the cause of truth. Corruption seemed to be making rapid strides within the limits of the national church; and, should nothing be done to arrest its progress, the most fatal results might ere long be anticipated. At this crisis, several ministers, who were revered by the people for their piety, and who were, at the same time, distinguished among their brethren for their talents and learning, united their efforts to check the progress of error, and to diffuse more extensively among the people the influence of sound and scriptural doctrine. This gave rise to a controversy in the Church of Scotland, which, on account of the important topics involved in it, and on account of the most eminent of her ministers being engaged either on the one side or on the other, excited an extraordinary degree of interest at the time, and the effects of it continued long to be felt. The result of the controversy was, in some respects, highly beneficial to the interests of religion, inasmuch as the excellent publications which it called forth from the press—relating to the vital doctrines of Christianity—tended to diffuse widely among the people correct views of the gospel, and to lead not a few of them to a more diligent cultivation of practical godliness.

I shall lay before my readers, in a condensed form, the particulars of this controversy; seeing that the spirit which it excited and fostered, had a powerful, and not a very remote, influence in bringing about the Secession.

This controversy originated in the republication of a book entitled the *Marrow of Modern Divinity*. Mr. Boston, having accidentally met with a copy of this book, while visiting one of his parishioners in Simprin, and having strongly recommended it to some of his brethren, as setting the difference between the law and the gospel in a clear point of view, Mr. James Hog, minister of Carnock, was so highly pleased with the sentiments which it contained, that he republished, in 1718, the first part of it, with a recommendatory preface. The Marrow, which consists chiefly of quotations from the writings of some of the most distinguished protestant divines, was originally written, about 1644, by one Edward Fisher,\* and at his first appearance was highly recommended by Strong, Caryle, Burroughs, and other eminent non-conforming ministers, members of the Westminster Assembly. Such was the popularity which it acquired, that it went through ten successive editions, and was of great service to not a few, in giving them correct views of the doctrines of the gospel. The republication of it by Mr. Hog excited a great ferment among the ministers of the Church of Scotland, especially in the Synod of Fife; for while there were some who highly approved of the sentiments contained in the book, there were others who considered them as of a dangerous tendency,—as tending to relax the obligations to holiness, and to cherish a spirit of antinomianism.

Among those who took the lead in condemning the Marrow, Principal Haddow, of St. Andrews, occupied a prominent place. A sermon, containing some severe strictures upon it, which he preached at the opening of the Synod of Fife, in April 1719, was published by him, at the request of his brethren, under the title of *The Record of God, and Duty of faith therein required*. The publication of this sermon called forth some smart replies from those of the opposite side; the consequence of which was, that a complaint was made to the Assembly, which met that same year, concerning the Marrow of Modern Divinity, as a book containing unscriptural and dangerous sentiments. The Assembly referred the matter to their commission. and enjoined them to take care,

\* According to some, Fisher originally followed the humble occupation of a barber in London, and afterwards became minister of an Independent congregation. According to others, he was the son of a knight, educated at Oxford, where he took the degree of A. M., and became an excellent Oriental scholar.

"that the purity of doctrine be preserved, and to call before them any authors or recommenders of books or pamphlets containing any doctrine not agreeable to the Confession of Faith." The Commission appointed a committee to take the subject under their consideration, and to prepare an overture concerning it, to be submitted to the next General Assembly. The committee divided themselves into two sections,—the one to meet at St. Andrews, and the other at Edinburgh. That section of the committee which met at St. Andrews, prepared extracts from the obnoxious publication, and forwarded them, with their remarks, to the brethren who met in Edinburgh. This latter portion of the committee, in fulfilment of the injunction of the Assembly, summoned before them the following ministers, to account for their conduct; viz. Messrs. James Hog, Carnock; Alexander Hamilton, Airth;\* James Brisbane, Stirling; John Warden, Gargunnoch,—all of whom were distinguished for their zeal and their orthodoxy. They were examined severally and apart by the committee. When Mr. Hog was called in, he was asked, whether he avowed himself the author of the preface to the last edition of the Marrow of Modern Divinity? He answered in the affirmative; and, in vindication of himself, he stated, that the book had come most unexpectedly into his hands; that the idea of reprinting it did not originate with himself, but had been suggested to him by others; and that it was in compliance with the earnest request of these persons he had written the recommendatory preface. He further added, that the reading of the book had been blessed to many excellent persons; and that, as for himself, "he had received more light about some important concerns of the glorious gospel, by perusing that book, than by any other human writings which providence had brought into his hands."†

When the Assembly met in 1720, the committee laid before them a report, containing a variety of extracts from the Marrow, which were considered by them as inculcating unscriptural sentiments. These extracts were classed under the following heads:—*Universal atonement and pardon; holiness not necessary to salvation; fear of punishment, and hope of reward, not allowed to be motives of a believer's obedience; the believer is not under the law as a rule of life.* To these were added the six following antinomian paradoxes. 1. A believer is not under the law, but is altogether delivered from it. 2. A believer doth not commit sin. 3. The Lord can see no sin in a believer. 4. The Lord is not angry

\* Afterwards removed to Stirling.

† Boston's Memoirs.

with a believer for his sins. 5. The Lord doth not chasten a believer for his sins. 6. A believer hath no cause either to confess his sins, or to crave pardon at the hand of God for them, either to fast or mourn, or humble himself before the Lord for them. These, with certain exceptionable expressions, selected here and there from the pages of the Marrow, were laid before the Assembly; and along with them were exhibited those texts of Scripture, and those articles of the Confession of Faith and of the Catechisms, to which these positions were said to be opposed. That the matter might be fully considered, a diet was appointed, at which not only the members but others were permitted freely to state what they had to advance in defence of the Marrow, or against the report of the committee.\* The result of the discussion was, that the Assembly gave their sanction to an act, by which "all the ministers of the church were strictly prohibited and discharged, either by printing, writing, or preaching, to recommend the Marrow, or in discourse to say any thing in favour of it; but, on the contrary, they were enjoined and required to warn and exhort their people, in whose hand the said book is, or may come, not to read or use the same."†

The passing of this act by the Assembly occasioned both alarm and distress to many excellent ministers; and the people also were thrown into agitation on account of it. According to the language of the Marrow-men, (as they were termed,) the Assembly condemned by it "a bundle of sweet and pleasant gospel truths." They were viewed by a large class of both ministers and people, as having fixed, under the false charge of antinomianism, the stamp of their reprobation upon some of the most important doctrines of the Christian religion. Measures were accordingly adopted, by some of the leading men of the popular party, to bring the subject again under the review of the Assembly, that they might get the obnoxious act repealed. A preparatory meeting for this purpose was held in the house of Mr. William Wardrop, apothecary in Edinburgh, at which the following ministers attended,—Messrs. James Kidd, Queensferry; Ebenezer Erskine, Portmoak;‡ his brother Ralph, and James Wardlaw, Dunfermline; William Wilson, Perth; James Bathgate, Orwell; Gabriel Wilson, Maxton; Henry Davidson, Galashiels; and Thomas Boston, Etterick. At this meeting it was agreed, after some time spent in prayer, that a representation should be drawn up, with the view of being laid before the Assembly; and the preparing of it was com-

\* Antinomianism of the Marrow Detected.

† Act 5th, Assem. 1720.

‡ Afterwards removed to Stirling

mitted to Mr. Ebenezer Erskine,\* with whom was lodged a draught which had previously been prepared by Mr. Boston; and the revising of the whole was intrusted to the brethren in Fife.

After several meetings, and after a careful consideration of the different propositions condemned by the act of Assembly, a representation was at length agreed upon, in which the representers express their grief, that the Assembly, by their condemnatory act, had given a severe wound to gospel truth, inasmuch as, in said act, they had pronounced the following Scriptural positions to be unsound and dangerous, viz.: That, in the Gospel, the Father hath made a free, unlimited offer of Christ and of salvation to all men, by virtue of which every individual who hears the gospel has a warrant to take hold of said offer, and to apply salvation to his own soul; that an assured persuasion of the truth of God's promise in the gospel, with respect to one's self in particular, is included in the very nature of saving faith; that the believer's holiness is in no way the price nor condition of his salvation; that believers, in yielding obedience to the law as a rule of life, ought not to be influenced, either by mercenary hopes of heaven, or by slavish fears of hell; that the believer is not, in any respect, under the law as a covenant of works; and that it is a just and Scriptural distinction which is made betwixt the law as a covenant of works, and the law as a rule of life in the hand of Christ.†

When the General Assembly met in 1721, this representation was laid before the Committee of Bills, and the representers expected that the subject would be brought immediately under the review of the supreme court. But the King's Commissioner having become suddenly indisposed during the sitting of the Assembly, the court was unexpectedly dissolved; and the representation was referred to the Commission, with powers to call the subscribers before them, and to have all matters concerning doctrine prepared for the consideration of the Assembly at the next meeting; but they themselves were not to give a final decision in the business. After the representers had been repeatedly before the Commission, and after an overture had been prepared on the subject of their representation, they were told that they would be required to answer certain queries which would be given

\* Boston's Memoirs.

† The representation was subscribed by twelve ministers, viz. Messrs. James Hog, Carnock; Thomas Boston, Etterick; John Bonar, Torphichen; John Williamson, Inveresk; James Kidd, Queensferry; Gabriel Wilson, Maxton; Ebenezer Erskine, Portmoak; Ralph Erskine, and James Wardlaw, Dunfermline; Henry Davidson, Galashiels; James Bathgate, Orwell; and William Hunter, Liffiesleaf.

them. The questions, which were delivered to them in writing, were twelve in number, and referred to the different topics alluded to in the representation. They were the following :—

1. Whether are there any precepts in the gospel that were not actually given before the gospel was revealed ?

2. Is not the believer now bound, by the authority of the Creator, to personal obedience to the moral law, though not in order to justification ?

3. Doth the annexing of a promise of life, and a threatening of death, to a precept, make it a covenant of works ?

4. If the moral law, antecedent to its receiving the form of a covenant of works, had a threatening of hell annexed to it ?

5. If it be peculiar to believers to be free of the commanding power of the law as a covenant of works ?

6. If a sinner, being justified, has all things at once that are necessary for salvation ? And if personal holiness, and progress in holy obedience, is not necessary to a justified person's possession of glory, in case of his continuing in life after his justification ?

7. Is preaching the necessity of a holy life in order to the obtaining of eternal happiness of dangerous consequence to the doctrine of free grace ?

8. Is knowledge, belief, and persuasion, that Christ died for me, and that he is mine, and that whatever he did and suffered he suffered for me, the direct act of faith, whereby a sinner is united to Christ, interested in him, instated in God's covenant of grace ? Or, is that knowledge or persuasion included in the very essence of that justifying act of faith ?

9. What is that act of faith by which a sinner appropriates Christ and his saving benefits to himself ?

10. Whether the revelation of the divine will in the word, affording a warrant to offer Christ unto all, and a warrant to all to receive him, can be said to be the Father's making a deed of gift and grant unto all mankind ? Is this grant made to all mankind by sovereign grace ? And whether is it absolute or conditional ?

11. Is the division of the law, as explained and applied in the Marrow, to be justified ? and can it not be rejected without burying several gospel truths ?

12. Is the hope of heaven, and fear of hell, to be excluded from the motives of believers' obedience ? And if not, how can the Marrow be defended, that expressly excludes them, though it should allow other motives ?

Some of the brethren demurred to the answering of these questions, as they thought that the proposing of them, in the circumstances of the case, was an undue mode of procedure,

and calculated to ensnare; others, however, were clear that, whatever should be the consequences, the questions ought to be answered, as it would afford them an opportunity of vindicating the truth. It was, therefore, agreed by them, after some consultation, that the questions should be received and answered under a protest, that "their condescension herein shall not be constructed as an approbation of this method of proceeding, nor be improved as a precedent."

The answers were prepared by Mr. Ebenezer Erskine and Mr. Wilson of Maxton, and were given in to the commission in March 1722, but they do not appear ever to have been laid before the Assembly, which gave occasion to their being printed and published very soon after. They are long and elaborate, and somewhat tedious withal; but they discover a profound knowledge of the system of revealed truth, as well as an intimate acquaintance with the theological controversies of the day; and the person who shall not think it too great a tax upon his time and his patience to peruse them, will find himself amply repaid by the clear exposition, and the excellent defence, which he shall therein find of the doctrine of free grace.

A termination was put to this business by the Assembly, which met in May 1722, passing an act explaining and modifying their former one, though retaining the most obnoxious parts of it. They strictly prohibited all ministers, under pain of the censures of the church, from teaching, either publicly or privately, by writing, printing, preaching, catechising, or in any other way, the positions condemned; and they charged the several presbyteries and synods, and the commission, to take particular care that this injunction be punctually observed by all ministers and members of the church, and more especially the presbyteries and synods within whose bounds any of the brethren, who signed the representation, might reside. They farther ordained, that these brethren be rebuked and admonished by the moderator, on account of injurious reflections contained in their representation; and, at the same time, it was declared that their conduct deserved a higher censure, but that the Assembly forbore to inflict it, in the hope that lenity exercised toward them would excite them to a more dutiful behaviour in time to come.

The brethren appeared at the bar of the Assembly, and were rebuked and admonished by the Moderator; but foreseeing what would take place, they had previously prepared and subscribed a protest,\* which one of their number was appointed to present. Accordingly, no sooner were the admonition and

\* Mr. Bonar being prevented by indisposition from attending, his name is not appended either to the protest, or to the answers to the queries.

rebuke administered, than Mr. Kidd presented the protest in the name of himself and his brethren. But the Assembly would neither read it nor allow it to lie on the table, but quickly terminated the sederunt.\* In this document, the representers, after enumerating the different steps which had been taken in this business, and briefly stating their objections to the proceedings of the Assembly, *protests*, That they dare not, in any manner of way, no, not by *silence*, consent unto, nor approve of, the acts relative unto this matter; and that it shall be lawful for them, agreeably to the word of God, and the standards of doctrine aforesaid in this church, to profess, preach, and still bear testimony unto, the truths condemned, or otherwise injured by the said acts of Assembly, notwithstanding the said acts, or whatsoever shall follow thereupon. On the afternoon, when the Assembly were to meet to give a final decision in the matter, a dreadful tempest of thunder and hail took place, by which the meeting of the Assembly was delayed for a considerable time. This was considered by many as a visible manifestation of the displeasure of heaven against the "*black work*" in which they were to be engaged. One of the supporters of the Marrow, speaking of this storm, says, "I well remember, with what serenity of mind, and comfort of heart, I heard the thunder of that day, the most terrible thunder-clap being just about three o'clock.† It made impression on many as heaven's testimony against their deed they were then appointed to do, though in this (he wisely adds) it is not for me to determine."

The controversy concerning the Marrow excited a great ferment among the people; and the effects which it produced did not pass away when the controversy ceased. Indeed, few controversies have been carried on within the Church of Scotland which have been productive of more important or more lasting consequences. One of the more direct results of it was, that the attention of the ministers throughout the Church was more immediately turned to those grand and leading doctrines which formed the chief topics of discussion; and a line of separation, which gradually became broader and broader, began at this time to be drawn betwixt the ministers themselves, according to the sentiments which they entertained on these controverted points, and according to the side which they espoused in the ecclesiastical courts. Many of the ministers acquired clearer and more enlarged views of the system of revealed truth; the doctrine of free grace was better understood, and more faithfully preached by them; and their ministrations among the people were attended with a greater degree of success: while there were others among them who, that they might be as far removed as pos-

\* Boston's Memoirs.

† This was the hour at which the Assembly was appointed to meet.

sible from the obnoxious sentiments of the Marrow-men, became more decidedly, as well as more avowedly, Arminian in their style of preaching. The gospel of Christ was exchanged by them for rationalism; and more of their time was spent in the pulpit in declaiming against what they called the antinomianism of the Marrow, than in preaching salvation through the blood of Christ. This empty declamatory mode of preaching prevailed chiefly among the younger divines, who, being newly sent forth from the universities, and being afraid that their literary attainments, and their intellectual acumen, might be called in question, should they be found ranking on the same side with such men as Boston, Hog, and the Erskines, thought that the best method of displaying their zeal and their learning, and of introducing themselves to the notice of their superiors, would be to declaim against antinomianism, and to make their discourses as rational and philosophical as possible.

The party spirit which the Marrow controversy kindled, was not confined to one district of the church. It pervaded, less or more, almost all the synods and presbyteries, though it raged more furiously in some than in others. From the zeal which some of the ministers displayed in suppressing the Marrow doctrines, it seemed as if they considered that the existence of their church, and even of religion itself, depended on the suppression of them. In some quarters, the zeal which was displayed in calling to account the abettors of these doctrines, was as great as that which was displayed against the supporters even of popery and of infidelity. The following statement is made by one who took an active part in the proceedings of that period:—" 'Tis the manner of some of your synods, I'm also told, to ask at presbyteries, when to be removed for privy censures, if any in their bounds commends or recommends the Marrow. I don't mind to have read, that ever your church ordered so narrow a scrutiny about any book, besides the acts of the Council of Trent on the back of your Reformation from popery. We have been much diverted with the story of a zealous divine with you, who, when this matter came first to be spoken of in his synod, rose up and asked once and again, *Moderator, are we to preach against it?* And, though one of his brethren pulled him by the sleeve, desiring him to sit down, *for there was no need of such questions*; he still insisted, and at length said, *Moderator, I have done it already, and I would know if I have done well, Yea, or No.*' " \*

It would be an act of injustice, however, to the memory of many good men, to affirm that all who united together in condemning the Marrow, were influenced by hostility to the

\* Letter to a gentleman at Edinburgh, a ruling elder of the Church of Scotland, &c.—P. 33.

truth. This was far from being the case. There were amongst them many excellent persons, whose piety and orthodoxy were unquestionable, and who, from conscientious motives, opposed the sentiments maintained by the Marrow-men, because they considered them unscriptural, and calculated to injure the interests of sound morality. Though it must be admitted, that the book which gave rise to this controversy, contains in it startling positions, and unguarded expressions, yet it contains in it also (what the title of it imports) the very *marrow* of gospel truth; and those persons who attempted to fasten upon it, and upon its defenders, the charge of antinomianism, certainly acted under mistaken views, and carried their opposition to an unreasonable length.

Another of the direct consequences which resulted from the agitation of this question, was the more extensive diffusion, among the people, of sound views of scripture doctrine. The condemning of the Marrow, by the Assembly, and the alarm sounded against it from many pulpits, had quite an opposite effect from what was intended.\* The condemned book was eagerly sought after by the multitude, who perused it with avidity; and, in the greater number of instances, became converts to the opinions which it inculcated. The press also teemed with controversial pamphlets, written, some of them, by the ablest ministers of the church, in which the peculiar doctrines of the gospel were brought prominently forward into notice. These had an extensive circulation among the people; and while they imparted to them clearer and more enlarged views of the gospel system, they tended, at the same time, to produce in them a relish for evangelical preaching. The current of popular opinion ran strongly in favour of those ministers who espoused the Marrow doctrines. Their sacramental occasions were attended by crowds,† many of whom came from a considerable dis-

\* "I'm told (says the writer of the *Letter* already quoted), a worthy divine, who spent some of his time at one of our universities, bestowed several Sabbaths on the *Marrow*; holding forth the many damnable errors in the book, and beseeching his dear people, as they tendered the safety of their souls, to be aware of it. Now, this happening ere his people had either seen or heard of the *Marrow*, they were mightily alarmed, and had much discourse among themselves on that subject, but could not agree upon the true name. Some alleged it was the *Marrow of Morality*; but they were corrected by others, who told them it was the *Mother of Divinity*: and many names, less proper than either of these, were offered, scarce two of them agreeing on the same title. However, they were all of them very desirous to see the book."

† The writer of the *Antinomianism of the Marrow Detected*, complains that "there are not a few who turn their backs upon communions in Edinburgh, or the suburbs thereof, and choose, at the very same precise time, to attend them, perhaps at the distance of a day's journey, as if the efficacy of ordinances were to proceed from ministers who distinguish themselves by some singular opinions."

tance; and, in certain instances, so great was the zeal of the people, that they left their own communions, and travelled a day's journey, that they might be present at the communions of those ministers whom they regarded as the champions of the truth.\*

The conduct of the Assembly, in this matter, was viewed with a jealous eye by a considerable proportion of the people. The keenness which they had displayed in condemning a book which had been so highly recommended, and the severity which they had exercised towards the representers in censuring them at their bar, were contrasted with the marked lenity which they had previously shown in the case of Professor Simson; and fears were entertained lest the majority of them were more inclined to countenance error than to defend the truth. Nor did the subsequent proceedings of the Assembly, which took place immediately after the settlement of this controversy, tend to diminish these fears; on the contrary, they were such as increased the growing jealousy of the people, and tended to alienate their affections more and more from the ruling party in the church.

Certain rumours having spread abroad that Professor Simson had not only disobeyed the injunctions given him by the Assembly of 1717, but that, in his lectures to the students, he had been guilty of teaching errors still more dangerous than those with which he had formerly been charged, the Presbytery of Glasgow ordered an inquiry to be made concerning the truth of these reports. They appointed a committee to wait upon the Professor, to make him acquainted with the nature of the reports that were in circulation con-

\* Carnock, Dunfermline, Orwell, Portmoak, Maxton, and Etterick, were places peculiarly distinguished by the attendance of the people on these occasions. The entertainment, for several successive days, of the strangers who came from all parts of the country to attend these solemnities, was no light tax upon the hospitality of the people, who resided in the neighbourhood of the church. It is but justice, however, to state that it was, in general, exercised in the true spirit of Christian love, and "not grudgingly." Mr. Boston mentions in his *Memoirs*, the following particulars concerning a sacramental occasion at Etterick, where great crowds of people usually attended, and where, as the district was entirely a pastoral one, the houses of the principal parishioners were, during the sacramental season, converted into a kind of caravansaries for the entertainment of strangers. "The tokens distributed to communicants," says he, "were about 777; the collection on the three days, £77: 13: 4 Scots. There were about nine score strangers in Midgehop; four score of them, William Black, husband of Isabel Biggar aforesaid, entertained, having before baken for them half a boll of meal for bread, bought 4s. 10d. sterling worth of wheat-bread, and killed three lambs, &c., and made thirty beds; and I believe their neighbour's, Robert Biggar, Isabel's brother, would be much the same. This I record once for all, for a swatch of the hospitality of the parish: for God hath given this people a largeness of heart to communicate of their substance, on these and other occasions also. Those within a mile of the church still had the far greater weight on solemn occasions."

cerning him, and to ask whether or not there was any foundation for them. The Professor declined meeting with the committee, assigning as his reason for doing so, the bad state of his health, which would not permit him to hold a conference with them. He said that if the presbytery had any thing to lay to his charge, they might proceed according to the rules of the church, and he would endeavour to answer them. At the same time, he sent a letter *extrajudicially* to the presbytery, stating to them what were his views of the doctrine of the Trinity, concerning which he was said to be heretical. The letter not being deemed satisfactory on certain points, a committee of presbytery was appointed to consider it more fully, and to bring in a report upon the subject.

In the mean time, the Assembly met in 1726. At this meeting, the commissioners from several presbyteries stated, that they were enjoined by their constituents to demand that an inquiry be immediately instituted into the reports which were in circulation concerning Mr. Simson's teaching unsound doctrine. The Assembly having learned from the commissioners of the Glasgow Presbytery, that they had already taken up the matter, enjoined them to proceed with all diligence in their inquiry into Mr. Simson's opinions concerning the doctrine of the Holy Trinity; and they showed a laudable zeal for maintaining the purity of doctrine, by appointing a committee of their most influential members, to co-operate with the presbytery in conducting this important inquiry. Neither the presbytery nor committee were, jointly or separately, to pronounce a final judgment, but to report to the next General Assembly the result of their investigation.

The charges preferred against Mr. Simson were, that he had denied the *necessary existence of our Lord Jesus Christ*; and that, in his lectures, he had taught the students, *That the necessary existence of the Son is a thing that we know not; that the phrase Necessary Existence was impertinent, and not to be used when speaking of the Trinity; that the three persons of the adorable Trinity are not said to be numerically one in substance or essence; and that the terms Necessary Existence, Supreme Deity, and the titles of the only true God, may be taken, and are taken, by some authors, in a sense that includes the personal property of the Father, and so not belonging to the Son.* He was further charged with having disobeyed the injunction of the Assembly of 1717, whereby he was prohibited from using all expressions and hypotheses that were not consistent with the form of sound words contained in Scripture and the Confession of Faith. Two different libels, founded upon these charges, were put into the Professor's hands, and the depositions of a great number of the students

who attended his lectures, were taken. The Assembly's Committee and the Glasgow Presbytery travailed in the business with a commendable zeal and diligence; and the task which they had to execute was by no means an easy one. The Professor, in conducting his defence, displayed both learning and ingenuity. He stoutly disputed every inch of ground, and endeavoured to bewilder his opponents, by leading them into labyrinths of metaphysics, and of scholastic theology. His defence was evasive in a high degree. At one time he rested it on a legal quibble, and at another on some nice metaphysical distinction. When driven from one subterfuge, he took shelter in another; and by availing himself of every possible plea, which his own ingenuity, or that of his legal advisers, could suggest, he was enabled to protract the process to a considerable length.

When the Assembly met in 1728, the whole of the above charges respecting Mr. Simson's views of the Trinity, after a tedious investigation, and after many keen discussions, which had occupied nearly the whole of the time of this and of the preceding Assembly, were found fully substantiated. A considerable number of the members were for inflicting the highest censure—deposition. But the heretical Professor had a powerful party of friends, who fought side by side with him, and who endeavoured to put the most favourable construction on every thing he had either said or done. These struggled hard to obtain the appointment of a committee, who should bring in an overture founded on the whole of the previous proceedings, with the view of guiding the Assembly as to the sentence they should pronounce. This motion they had sufficient influence to carry. A committee was appointed to prepare an overture, which should reconcile all parties. Previous to the appointment of this committee, the Professor had given in to the Assembly a paper, disowning the error with which he had been charged, and expressing his belief in the *Necessary Existence* of the Lord Jesus Christ; and when the committee met, he presented to them another paper, avowing his belief in the doctrine of the Trinity. This paper was to the following effect:

“The Professor is of opinion, and believes, that there is *one only God*; that, in the unity of the Godhead, there are *three persons, God the Father, &c.* and that the three persons in the Godhead are one substance or essence in number; and is sorry that, in his teaching, he should have said any thing which has given ground to any to think that he taught any thing contrary to this proposition. Jo. SIMSON.”

When the committee gave in their report, they presented this paper along with it; and, after much reasoning, and vari-

ous amendments, the overture, which the Assembly adopted, was in substance as follows:—They found that Mr. Simson, in the papers given in by him to the Assembly, asserted the necessary existence, and the supreme Deity of Christ; and that he affirmed his belief in the existence of three persons in one divine essence; and they declared that his sentiments upon these articles, as expressed in the foresaid papers, were “sound and orthodox;” but, as it had been found proved against him, by this and the preceding Assembly, that he had taught things subversive of these blessed truths, and that he had expressed himself in such terms, as tended to infuse ill-grounded doubts and scruples into the minds of men; and, as he had neglected so many opportunities of giving satisfaction to the judicatories of the church, concerning his soundness in the faith, with regard to these important articles, they found themselves obliged, for the honour of truth, and in order to prevent the spreading of error, to testify their high dissatisfaction with his conduct: “And many members declaring, that they thought the said Mr. John Simson deserved deposition, the Assembly, after mature deliberation, considering that the process is not entirely finished, and the other circumstances of the case, as it now stands, did agree to suspend Mr. John Simson from preaching and teaching, and all exercise of any ecclesiastical power or function, until another General Assembly shall think fit to take off this sentence.” They further ordered their proceedings to be printed, and to be transmitted, along with the state of the process, to the several presbyteries, that they might give instructions to their Commissioners to the next Assembly, what they wished farther to be done in this matter.

At the next meeting of the Assembly, in 1729, this business underwent another long discussion. The debates upon it continued for eight days; and, during the whole of that time, the Assembly was crowded with spectators, all of whom took the deepest interest in the proceedings. Though several of those who delivered their sentiments, were for inflicting the sentence of deposition,\* yet it was ultimately carried, by Mr. Simson's friends, that a committee should be appointed to prepare an overture, with a view to the final settlement of the question. When the overture was brought in, it was found to be nothing more than an echo of the one which had been adopted by the preceding Assembly. It simply affirmed the sentence of suspension, previously pronounced, with this addition, that the committee gave it as their judgment, that it was not fit nor safe that Mr. Simson be further employed in teach-

\* Mr. Boston says that the major part of the Assembly were decidedly of this opinion.—*Memoirs*, p. 437.

ing divinity, and instructing youth designed for the holy ministry in this church; and, that the judicatories of the church might have no more trouble about this process, it was declared that, for peace-sake, the whole of this matter should rest here.

Mr. Simson's friends carefully avoided bringing this overture to a vote. They urged the importance of the Assembly being unanimous in their decision upon this subject, and were exceedingly importunate that the overture should be acquiesced in, without any farther discussion. Though several had, only a little before, been loud in their cry for deposition, yet all now seemed inclined quietly to acquiesce, for the sake of peace. One individual alone had the courage to stand up, and avow his dissent. This was Mr. Thomas Boston. When the overture was read, and when the Moderator asked, if the Assembly acquiesced in it, there was a breathless silence over the house for a minute or so. Mr. Boston then rose, and spoke to the following effect:—"Moderator, I find myself laid under a necessity of declaring my dissent from this decision of the Assembly, as I think the censure inflicted by it on Professor Simson, is not adequate to the offence he has given, as to the points of doctrine that have been proved he taught the students under his care, and have been found relevant to infer censure. I cannot help thinking, Sir, that the cause of Jesus Christ, as to the great and essential point of his supreme Deity, has been at the bar of this Assembly requiring justice; and, as I am shortly to answer at His bar for all I do or say, I dare not give my assent to the decision of this act. On the contrary, I find myself obliged, on this occasion, to offer a protest against it; and, therefore, in my own name, and in the name of all that shall adhere to me, and if none here will,"—here he paused for an instant, and looked round him with an air of gravity and importance, and then added, "For myself alone, I crave leave to enter my protest against the decision of this act."\* The Moderator (Mr. James Alston of Dirleton) interposed, and endeavoured to dissuade him from taking such a step, as it would interrupt the harmony of the decision. But Mr. Boston was firm to his purpose. Having previously prepared a paper, containing his reasons of dissent, he read it aloud, as follows:—

"I dissent, as judging it (inasmuch as it doth not bear a deposition of Mr. Simson from the office of the ministry, of teaching and preaching the gospel of the blessed God) to be no just testimony of this church's indignation against the dishonour done by the said Mr. Simson to our glorious Redeemer, the great God and our Saviour, and what hath been found both relevant and proved against him by the two imne-

\* Letter from a dissenting minister, in the Appendix to Boston's Memoirs, p. 50. See also Memoirs, p. 438.

diately preceding General Assemblies ; and judging the same also not to be agreeable to the rules of God's word in such cases, nor to the form of process established in this church ; to be saddening to the hearts of the generality of the ministers and godly through the land, and not sufficient to dash the hopes of the proud contemners of revealed religion, and the awful and incomprehensible mysteries of the same, both at home and abroad ; nor a fit means to bring the said Mr. Simson himself to repentance, whereof as yet he hath given no evidence. All which shall be fully manifested to the world if need be."

When he had finished, the Moderator again addressed him, and with much emotion said ;—" Brother, I hope, in this matter, where you see such an appearance of unanimity, you will not do anything that may have a tendency to rend and divide this church, and tear out the bowels of your mother." To which Mr. Boston, still standing, replied,— " Rather, Sir, than what I am now offering should have that effect, I would wish that I and my protest should be buried under a mountain. There are many in this Assembly whom I never saw in the face before, nor know ; but such of them as I know, and differ from me in this matter, I not only have the utmost charity for them notwithstanding, but I could willingly sit at their feet and learn Christ. However, I cannot see there should be any danger of a breach in this church on this occasion to permit one member, who is grieved and gruelled by this decision, to enter his protest against it." The Moderator, however, continued to urge Mr. Boston,—and at length prevailed upon him not to insist, at present, upon the marking of his dissent, but to take the matter into consideration, and to consult some of his brethren, as to the course which he should pursue. Though many of Mr. Boston's friends were of the same opinion with himself, as to the merits of the cause, yet, for peace-sake, they thought it would be better not to enter a dissent upon the Assembly's record, as doing so might weaken the effect of the decision. Mr. Boston, though his sentiments remained unchanged, yielded to their wishes on this point ; and when the Assembly met on the following day, he requested permission to address the house, which being granted, he produced a paper, containing his final resolution, and read aloud as follows :—

" Moderator, I have, according to your desire, considered again my dissenting from the sentence and decision of this Venerable Assembly in the affair of Mr. Simson : and as it was with no design to break in upon the peace of this church, but for the necessary exoneration of my own conscience, that I did formally declare my dissent in that matter, so I can see

no ground to retract it, and therefore am far from retracting the same. Yet, forasmuch as the marking of it in your records, which is the only thing that now remains in that matter, is judged by my very reverend fathers and brethren of this Assembly to be of dangerous consequences to the peace of this church, which I think myself obliged in conscience to be very tender of, I do not insist for the marking of it in your records; but having the dissent, as I declared it, by me, in writ, from which I read it before this Venerable Assembly, and having also in writing what I have now delivered, I am resolved, through grace, to make such use of the same afterward, as pressing necessity, in any undesirable event, may be judged to require."

Thus terminated, in a manner not the most credible to the General Assembly, one of the most important processes that was ever brought before that Court. The honour of the Saviour and the interests of religion were deeply involved in it; and the eyes of the Scottish Church were turned toward their spiritual rulers, to see what would be the decision which they should pronounce. That Mr. Simson had been guilty of publicly teaching the erroneous opinions, respecting the doctrine of the Trinity, which were laid to his charge, was established, in the clearest manner, by the witnesses that were examined in support of the libel; that he had been guilty also of disobeying the injunction of the Assembly of 1717, and that he had, notwithstanding such injunction, inculcated upon the students the sentiments which he had been forbidden to teach—was established, in a manner no less satisfactory, by the evidence laid before the Glasgow Presbytery and the Assembly's committee. He had kept the whole of the church courts in a ferment, for the space of three years, and had endeavoured by every species of subterfuge and legal quibbling, to extricate himself from the charges that were brought against him; and at length, when the principal charges were fully established, and when he found that there was some danger of a sentence of deposition going forth against him, he made a public and explicit disavowal of the obnoxious sentiments imputed to him—with the view of averting the storm, and saving at least his salary, if not his situation. Yet, in these circumstances, did the Assembly think, that they sufficiently discharged their duty to their God, and to the church, when they merely suspended the guilty individual from the exercise of his ecclesiastical functions, and declared him unfit to be any longer intrusted with the training of youth for the holy ministry. That the Assembly, with the exception of one solitary individual, should be unanimous in pronouncing such a decision, excites our surprise; and after making every allowance

for a feeling of sympathy operating in favour of the accused, and also for a laudable desire to preserve peace in the church, which influenced the minds of a certain portion of the members,—still we cannot fail to recognise, in such a decision, a considerable indifference manifested to the interests of truth. When we contrast the leniency of the sentence pronounced against Mr. Simson, after being a *second time* convicted of heresy, with the fiery zeal which had, only a short while before, burned so hotly against the good men who defended the doctrines of the Marrow, and with the anathemas which had been thundered forth against all who should preach, or any way countenance these doctrines—we do not wonder, that an unfavourable impression should have been produced upon the minds of the people, by the issue of Mr. Simson's process; and that the Assembly should have been accused, not merely of lukewarmness, but of giving their indirect sanction to the grossest errors.

Lest some of my readers may suppose it strange that the Marrow-men, who on former occasions had been so bold in defence of the truth, should have been silent on the present occasion, it may be proper to mention that, with the exception of Mr. Boston, none of them were members of this Assembly. Mr. Gabriel Wilson was present, though not a member; and after that the Assembly had declared their acquiescence in the overture proposed to them by the committee, he requested leave to speak, which being granted, he addressed the Moderator as follows:—"In regard, I am persuaded this sentence does not duly serve to glorify God our Saviour, nor to preserve this church upon him as the foundation; and in regard it is no wise agreeable to the mind of the Church of Scotland, made known to this Assembly; and that it will, I am afraid, (or I am confident,) hasten bringing wrath upon this church,—I therefore declare my testimony against it."

In consequence of the proceedings, to which I have adverted in the preceding pages, the minds of the people were considerably fretted, and a growing spirit of dissatisfaction began to manifest itself. Other causes than those I have now mentioned, in which the interests of the people were more deeply involved, now came into operation,—and the spirit of discontent spread wider and wider, until it fairly burst forth into a flame. The discussions that were carried on concerning the law of patronage,—the high tone which the Assembly began to assume in enforcing the settlement of ministers in opposition to the avowed wishes of the people,—and the supercilious treatment given to some of the popular ministers, because they would not silently submit to arbitrary enactments, in opposition to the dictates of their own conscience, and to the laws of

God—these were the immediate causes which led to the Secession; and with a concise detail of these I shall close this introductory part, and enter upon my main narrative.

That those eminent men, who were instruments in the hand of God for achieving the Reformation in Scotland, considered patronage a great evil in the church,—that they pronounced it to be contrary to the word of God, and contended for the complete abolition of it,—must be sufficiently obvious to any person who peruses the First and Second Books of Discipline. They there declare, that the liberty of the election of persons called to the ecclesiastical functions, was observed without interruption, “so long as the kirk was not corrupted by anti-christ;” and they desire that it “be restored and retained within this realm.” They further “desire all them that truly fear God, earnestly to consider, that forasmuch as the names of patronages and benefices, together with the effect thereof, have flowed from the Pope, and corruption of the canon law only, in so far as thereby any person was intruded or placed over kirks, having *curam animarum* (the care of souls); and forasmuch as that manner of proceeding hath no ground in the word of God, but is contrary to the same, and to the said liberty of election, they ought not now to have place in this light of reformation.”\*

These were the sentiments of the first reformers of the Scottish Church, in reference to patronage; and they endeavoured, so far as their influence extended, to reduce them to practice. For, in the form of church government which they sketched out, as most agreeable to the word of God, they declared the power of choosing a minister, and other office-bearers, to be vested in the elders and people of the respective congregations. In the First Book of Discipline, it is expressly declared, that “No man should enter in the ministry, without a lawful vocation. The lawful vocation standeth in the election of the people, examination of the ministry, and admission by them both.” And again, “No minister should be intruded upon any particular kirk, without their consent.”† “It appertaineth to the people, and to every several congregation, to elect their own ministers. It is to be altogether avoided, that any man be violently intruded or thrust in upon a congregation; but this liberty, with all care, must be reserved to every several church, to have their votes and suffrages in the election of their ministers.”‡

In the Second Book of Discipline the same doctrine is taught, though it is limited to a certain extent;—the rule there laid down gives the power of election to the eldership,

\* Second Book of Discipline, chap. xii. † Sect. iv. of the First Book.

‡ First Book of Discipline, chap. iv. paragraphs 2 and 4.

but at the same time requires the consent of the congregation, to render the election by the eldership valid ; and unless this consent were obtained, no ordination could take place. " Election," says the Second Book, " is the choosing out of a person or persons most able, to the office that vakes, by the judgment of the eldership, and consent of the congregation, to which the person or persons shall be appointed." " In the order of election, it is to be eschewed, that any person be intruded in any offices of the kirk, contrary to the will of the congregation to which they are appointed, or without the voice of the eldership."\* The difference betwixt the First and the Second Books of Discipline, with regard to the election of ministers is, that the First Book allowed the people a positive vote ; whereas, by the Second Book, they were allowed only a negative voice ; that is, the election or nomination of the candidate lay, in the first place, with the eldership (or session) ; the person on whom the session fixed, as the object of their choice, was then proposed to the congregation for their *consent* : if the consent was given, the ordination forthwith proceeded ; if the candidate was rejected, the election by the eldership was null and void. This was the law of the election of office-bearers in the church, according to the Second Book of Discipline. Though this law did not give to the people all the power in the election of their office-bearers, to which, according to the Scriptures, they were entitled,—and which had been previously conceded to them by the First Book of Discipline,—yet it distinctly recognised their right to *accept of* or to *reject* any candidate that might be proposed to them ; and it did so on the avowed principle, that to have intruded on them any person, or persons, without their consent, would have been contrary to the word of God ; in other words—even taking the lowest view of the question—the consent of the people, in the appointment of their ministers and elders, is here admitted to be a *divine right*, of which they could not be deprived without trampling upon the authority of God.†

\* Chap. iii. of the Second Book.

† A late writer (Sir Henry Moncrieff Wellwood) has affirmed, that it was never recognised as a law of the Scottish church, that the people had a *divine right* to choose their own pastors. This is disingenuous. This right is most distinctly implied in the extracts quoted above, from the First and Second Books of Discipline. Why was patronage pronounced to be contrary to the word of God ? Why was the election of the minister declared to be by " the judgment of the eldership, and consent of the congregation ?" Why was it to be " eschewed, that any person be intruded into any office of the kirk, contrary to the will of the congregation ?" It is scarcely possible that the *principle of popular election* could be stated in broader terms. It might not, indeed, on account of circumstances, be acted upon to its full extent ; but the principle was recognised, as one that was *sanctioned by divine authority* :

Notwithstanding, however, the enactments contained in the First and Second Books of Discipline, it does not appear that the people were permitted, for a considerable period, to exercise the privileges therein conceded to them. So far down as the year 1649, patronage, with all its grievances, still continued in force; though, in certain instances, it was somewhat modified. But in that year the Scottish parliament declared, "that patronages and presentations of kirks is an evil and bondage under which the Lord's people and ministers of this land have long groaned; and that it hath no warrant in God's word, but is founded only on the common law, and is a custom popish, and brought into the kirk in time of ignorance and superstition; and that the same is contrary to the Second Book of Discipline, in which, upon solid and good ground, it is reckoned among abuses that are desired to be reformed, and unto several acts of General Assemblies; and that it is prejudicial to the liberty of the people and planting of kirks, and unto the free calling and entry of ministers into their charges."\* On these grounds, this grievance, so long complained of by the church, was abolished. It was further recommended, by the same parliament, to the next General Assembly, to determine "the just and proper interest of congregations and presbyteries, in providing of kirks with ministers," and to ascertain "what is to be accounted the congregation having that interest;" and they were required "to condescend upon a certain standing way for being a settled rule therein for all times coming." Agreeably to this recommendation of parliament, the Assembly, when they met in July that same year, took up the business; and, before they separated, sanctioned a *Directory for Election of Ministers*, which was substantially the same with that contained in the Second Book of Discipline. According to this *Directory*, the session were invested with the power of electing the ministers; and to the congregation was given the power either of acquiescing in the session's choice, or of dissenting from it. If a majority of the congregation dissented, and if it was found by the presbytery that the dissent was not grounded "on causeless prejudices," a new election was appointed to take place.†

This rule continued to be observed till the restoration of the Second Charles, when patronages were again revived, and all ministers who had been inducted into charges, without having received a presentation (that is, since the year 1649) were required to accept of presentations from the legal patrons, or they were to leave their churches. A great

and patronage, which is the opposite of popular election, was declared to be contrary to the word of God.

\* Act 39.

† *Directory for Election of Ministers*, 1649.

number of faithful ministers preferred the latter part of the alternative; they refused to comply with the tyrannical mandate, and were, in consequence, ejected from their charges. Episcopacy was speedily restored, and confusion prevailed throughout the Scottish Church. In the year 1690, immediately after the memorable Revolution, patronages were again, in a certain sense, abolished; and a new enactment was made with regard to the election of ministers. The power of election was vested in the hands of the session and protestant heritors, in country parishes; and of magistrates and town-council and session in burghs; and to the congregation was given the power of approving or disapproving of the choice thus made. Should any opposition be made by the congregation, or by any portion of it, to the candidate proposed, their reasons for doing so were to be laid before the church courts, who were to judge of their validity, and their judgment in the matter was declared to be final. The same act further appointed the sum of six hundred merks to be paid, by every congregation, to the patron, as a remuneration for his being deprived of the right of presentation; and it also declared, that should no election of a minister take place, in the manner now mentioned, within six months after the congregations had become vacant, the presbytery should be empowered to plant the same.\*

This act was rescinded, in 1711, on the ground that it "had proved inconvenient, and had occasioned great heats and divisions;" and the yoke of patronage was again wreathed around the necks of the people. For some time, however, after the revival of the law of patronage, the practical evils of it were not experienced to any great extent, on account of a general disinclination, on the part of ministers, to accept of presentations, and on account of the great number of instances in which presbyteries were permitted to settle vacant congregations, either by virtue of the *jus devolutum*, or by the tacit consent of patrons. The feeling against presentations was decidedly general, amongst both ministers and people; and repeated instances occur, during the transactions of this period, in which presentations were set aside by the presbyteries, on the ground of the opposition that was made to the presentee by the people, and ministers were inducted that were more agreeable to the wishes of the congregation.

This state of things did not long continue. The laudable squeamishness, which at first prevailed among ministers, with regard to accepting of presentations, gradually diminished. The resistance, of course, on the part of the people,

\* Parl. 1690. Act 23.

became both more frequent and more obstinate. A spirit was roused, which the leaders of the church courts, with all their talents and address, found it difficult to manage. Betwixt the law of patronage, on the one hand, enforcing its claims, and the voice of the people, on the other, remonstrating against ecclesiastical tyranny, they felt themselves placed in difficult circumstances. The records of the General Assembly, during the years that immediately preceded the commencement of the Secession, furnish us with numerous instances of appeals, on the part of the people, against the decisions of the inferior courts, in regard to the settlement of ministers. The issue of these appeals was almost uniformly unfavourable. Indeed, when no specific charge was brought against the life or doctrine of the presentees, what else could the Assembly do, according to the constitution of their church, than order them to be inducted? The law of patronage was imperative; and when both patron and presentee were firm in demanding that the law should be carried into effect, it is easy to perceive that the murmurs of the people—loud and deep though they might be—would be of no avail.

What tended to hasten the approaching crisis still more, and added greatly to the difficulty of the supreme court in effecting a settlement in opposition to the wishes of the people, was, that in all contested questions a considerable party of the ministers themselves espoused the popular side. They not only spoke and voted against the violent intrusion of ministers into parishes, but they actually refused to carry into effect the decisions of the Assembly, by absenting themselves from ordinations, even within the bounds of their own presbytery, in those cases where a presentee was ordered to be inducted in opposition to the wishes of the people.

In consequence of this unbending spirit displayed by the more popular ministers, the Assembly felt themselves placed in circumstances of peculiar difficulty. These ministers, regarding it as a matter of conscience, would neither be compelled nor cajoled to countenance, by their presence, those violent settlements, which were now becoming so frequent throughout the country. Besides, they had the great majority of the people on their side; and if the Assembly had peremptorily commanded them to carry into effect their decisions upon pain of suspension or deprivation, it would have occasioned a breach in their church, much more serious than that which afterwards took place. In these circumstances, being unwilling to risk their authority against the refractory ministers on the one hand, or to succumb before the opposition of the people on the other, they had recourse to a poor expedient, in

order to carry into effect their own arbitrary decisions. The expedient which they adopted was at once unscriptural, unconstitutional, and at variance with sound policy. In those cases, where a violent settlement was appointed to take place, instead of rendering it imperative on the presbyteries to proceed with the ordination in the usual way, the Assembly or Commission appointed a committee of their own number, or members from some of the neighbouring synods or presbyteries, to meet and ordain the obnoxious presentee, leaving it optional to the ministers of the presbytery within whose bounds the ordination took place, either to attend or not, as they might think proper. Such a mode of procedure was calculated to bring the authority of the supreme court into contempt, and tended to foster, rather than repress, a spirit of resistance on the part of the people. This expedient was first adopted in 1729, in the case of New-Machar, and continued to be resorted to, in cases of difficulty, for a period of twenty years, when it was abandoned; and presbyteries were peremptorily enjoined to proceed with the settlement of presentees according to the usual mode, whether the settlement was agreeable to their wishes or not.\*

The state of affairs in the national church at this period, even its greatest admirers must admit, was deplorably bad. The people groaned under the yoke of patronage, and in vain did they apply for relief to the ecclesiastical rulers. These, so far from listening to their complaints, or sympathizing with them, seemed resolved to carry matters with a high hand. The violent intrusion of ministers upon reclaiming congregations prevailed in every part of the country. At every meeting of the Assembly, for several successive years, no small portion of their business consisted in considering cases of appeal, that were occasioned by the attempt to impose ministers upon parishes in opposition to the wishes of the people. In the journal of the Assembly's proceedings for 1730, there are recorded no fewer than *twelve* cases of this description.† The mentioning of this fact may serve to give my readers some idea of the agitated state of the country at the time immediately preceding the commencement of the Secession. Some of these cases were protracted from one Assembly to another; and during the time that they were thus kept in dependence, the minds of the people were kept in a state of the greatest excitement. In certain instances, the presbyteries and synods

\* Appendix to Moncrieff's *Life of Erskine*, p. 442.

† The parishes mentioned are the following:—Renfrew, Crimond, New-Machar, Old-Machar, Towrie, Hutton, Kinross, Dunblane, Balfour, Eccles, Kiltarn, Marykirk. Some of these cases were continued from one Assembly to another.

were inclined to support the claims of the people; but when their cause came to be discussed at the bar of the Assembly, or when it was referred by the Assembly to the Commission, their appeal was almost uniformly unsuccessful.

The policy pursued by those who took the lead in the church courts at this period, obviously tended to establish a species of ecclesiastical despotism, in the exercise of which they might give effect to the law of patronage, and crush the doctrine of popular election, so keenly contended for by the people, and by a considerable portion of the ministers. Complaints were made, that the Commission, in certain instances, sustained calls which had been attested merely by a notary public, without any moderation having taken place by appointment of presbytery. The powers exercised by the Commission were of an arbitrary and odious kind; they reversed the sentences of synods, even though their number might be inferior to that of the synod whose sentence was reversed; and they censured presbyteries and synods for testifying their displeasure against those ministers who accepted of presentations. The Assembly occasionally found fault with the Commission for having exceeded the powers intrusted to them; but it was remarked, that though they censured them, they seldom, if ever, reversed their objectionable proceedings. In certain cases, where the people proved refractory, and where the presbytery was resolved to grant induction to an unpopular candidate, an armed force was employed to carry into effect the decisions of the church courts; and the unseemly spectacle was now and then exhibited of the ministers of religion being guarded to church upon a Sabbath by files of dragoons, amid the noise of drums, and the flashing of swords, that they might serve the edict of an hireling, to whose ministry the people were resolved not to submit. A writer of that day gives the following account of a scene of this kind which took place at Bathgate, at the serving of the edict of Mr. Thomas Laurie, by appointment of the presbytery of Linlithgow:—“These and such like things were done to terrify the people; and yet for all that, these gentlemen and the two ministers that were to serve the edict, being conscious to themselves of the badness of their cause, and what an evil part they were acting, thought not fit to do it until they got a troop of dragoons to be a guard to them; and accordingly, November 17, 1717, being the Sabbath-day, they came to Bathgate, and when approaching the town, they caused beat their drum, and draw their swords, and in this posture came through the town, guarding the ministers into the church, riding and striking, with their naked swords, at the women and others standing gazing upon the way side, which was a melancholy Sabbath

in Bathgate, the Sabbath-day being much profaned, not only by the people of the place, but by many coming from other parishes, to see a new way of propagating the Gospel by red-coat booted apostles officiating as elders.”\*

In 1730, the Assembly, having affirmed the sentence of the Commission, enjoined the presbytery of Chirnside to proceed with a violent settlement in the parish of Hutton. Several members craved that their dissent from this decision might be recorded. This was refused, on the ground, that the granting of it would “tend to disturb the peace of the church!” And before the Assembly dismissed, it was solemnly enacted, that henceforward no reasons of dissent “against the determination of church judicatures” shall be entered on the record.

By such arbitrary proceedings as these, the minds of the people, and of not a few of the ministers, were much irritated; and that a revolt should ere long take place against the misgovernment of rulers, who showed such a total disregard of the feelings of those whose spiritual interests they were bound to promote, was nothing more than might have been expected. In looking back to the transactions of that period, instead of wondering that so many excellent men left the pale of the Establishment when the Secession commenced, our only surprise is, that they continued so long to abide in her communion. No measures could have been adopted that were better fitted for secularizing the Scottish Church, than those which the dominant party, in her ecclesiastical courts, actually pursued. That this was the object which they had in view in adopting these measures, I shall not take upon me to affirm, but that this was the decided tendency of the course which they pursued, is sufficiently obvious. In conducting their administration, they were guided more by the dictates of worldly policy, than by the maxims of scripture; when argument failed in silencing objections, they employed force, and when men could not be induced by persuasion to submit to their arbitrary enactments, they had recourse to terror. Armed with the authority of the state, as well as of the church, they aimed at bearing down all opposition, by occasionally calling in to their aid the strong arm of the law. That men should tamely submit, for any length of time, to have their feelings outraged, their rights trampled upon, and their complaints disregarded, without making any effort to emancipate themselves from the tyranny which subjects them to such wrongs, is what we have no reason to expect from human nature. Those who are oppressed, will take the

\* Letter to a minister of the gospel, concerning the parish of Bathgate, 1720, p. 18.

first opportunity that presents itself of breaking the yoke from their necks, and, having burst asunder their fetters, will dash them in the face of their oppressors. My readers, after perusing the preceding statements, will not be surprised to be told, that the minds of a considerable portion of the people in Scotland were alienated, by the transactions referred to, from their ecclesiastical rulers; and that no sooner was a way of escape opened up to them from the grievous trammels to which they were subjected, than multitudes eagerly availed themselves of it. This way of escape was opened up by the Secession which took place from the National Church,—an event which, though greatly deplored at first, has been productive of essential benefit to the country, and is every day spreading its blessings wider and wider. I cannot but regard it as a merciful interposition of Providence, on behalf of our land, that the Secession Church sprung into existence at the time it did, seeing that it has been honoured of God as an instrument for maintaining, in an eminent degree, sound doctrine, purity of discipline, and religious liberty, in this northern part of the island; seeing that, from first to last, many thousands of pious Christians have found a quiet retreat in its bosom from the evils of patronage, and from the other grievances complained of in the Establishment; and seeing that, by means of the reflex influence which it has exercised upon the national church, it has considerably checked it in its progress of deterioration, and rendered it, in some respects, more efficient.

Having thus taken a review of the leading events connected with the ecclesiastical history of our country, from the period of the Revolution till the uplifting of the standard of the Secession; and having pointed out the causes which prepared the minds of men for an extensive revolt from the judicatories of the Established Church of Scotland, I shall now detail, as faithfully and as minutely as I can, the various particulars connected with the rise, progress, and present attitude of that portion of the Christian community whose history it is the object of the present narrative to record.

## PART I.

### FROM THE COMMENCEMENT OF THE SECESSION, TILL THE DIVISION OCCASIONED BY THE CONTROVERSY ABOUT THE BURGESS OATH.

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#### CHAPTER I.

Overture concerning the Jus Devolutum—Passed into a law—Mr. Ebenezer Erskine and other brethren protest against it—Their protest refused—Representation of ministers and elders—Representation of 1,700 persons—Representations rejected—Violent settlement at Kinross—Mr. Ebenezer Erskine's Sermon at Perth—Complaint made concerning it—Committee of Synod appointed to investigate—Objectionable passages adduced by the committee—Charges founded on them—Mr. Erskine's answers—Debate in Synod—Mr. Erskine found censurable—Refuses to submit to censure—Twelve ministers and two elders protest against the decision of Synod—Mr. Erskine and Mr. Fisher protest and appeal to the General Assembly—Sentence of Synod affirmed—Mr. Erskine rebuked and admonished—Protestation by Messrs. Erskine, Wilson, Moncrieff, and Fisher—Assembly in an uproar—The four brethren appointed to appear before the Commission—Proceedings of the Commission—The four brethren suspended from the exercise of their ministry—Their pastoral relation loosed—Declared no longer ministers of the Church of Scotland—Mr. Gabriel Wilson and six other ministers protest against this decision—Protestation of the four brethren—Vindication of the Fathers of the Secession.

By the law of patronage, it was provided, that if a patron did not exercise his right of presenting an individual to a parish, within six months after it became vacant, the presbytery should (*jure devoluto*) take measures for inducting a minister into the parish. As the cases which occurred of this description were numerous, and as the presbyteries, when the right devolved upon them, sometimes gave the people the liberty of choosing their ministers, and at other times exercised a species of patronage themselves, so it was deemed desirable that a uniform method of procedure should be adopted by presbyteries, in the appointment of ministers to vacant parishes. The doctrine of the *divine right* of the people to choose their own pastors, was openly insisted upon in the church courts; and in those presbyteries, where the party preponderated that held this doctrine, it was reduced to practice, to the great satisfaction of the people. It was with the view of crushing this doctrine, and of preventing it from being acted upon in

any part of the church, that an overture was brought before the Assembly of 1731, and by them ordered to be transmitted to the different presbyteries; that, according to the barrier act, they might consider it, and report at next meeting whether or not it should be passed into a law. The avowed object of the overture was to produce a uniformity in the method of settling vacant parishes, in those cases where the right of appointment devolved upon the presbyteries; and, at the same time, to do this in such a way as to give no countenance to the doctrine of popular election; inasmuch as this doctrine was exceedingly unpalatable to the ruling party in the church, and could not be acted upon, consistently with the law of patronage, which they were resolved, at all hazards, to enforce. By this overture, it was proposed, that the election of a minister for a vacant parish should belong only to elders, and to protestant heritors; and, in royal burghs, to the magistrates, town council, and elders; and, if any part of the burgh was landward, the heritors, being protestant, were to vote along with them. After the election, the person elected was to be proposed to the congregation, to be by them "either approved or disapproved." If the congregation disapproved of the choice by the elders and heritors, they were to lay their reasons before the presbytery, "by whose determination the calling and entry of the minister should be concluded according to the rules of the church." \* It is true, as has been affirmed, that this overture imposed no greater restrictions upon the freedom of the people, in the choice of their ministers, than had formerly been imposed by the act of parliament in 1690; but there was this great difference, that, in the one case, it was the ministers of religion, the spiritual guides of the people, that were infringing upon the Christian privileges of the people; and, in the other, it was the rulers of the state who, for political purposes, restricted the freedom of election. Formerly, notwithstanding the existence of acts of parliament, the presbyteries, in cases where the right of planting vacant parishes devolved upon them, frequently granted to the people all the liberty that they could wish for, in choosing their own ministers. Now, it was resolved, by the ruling party, to render it imperative on all presbyteries to pursue the same restrictive rule, in every case; that is, in no one instance to grant to the people the liberty of election, but to restrict the privilege to elders and protestant heritors. Heritors, whether resident or nonresident, were permitted to choose *by proxy*. It was not even required of them that they be members of the church. They might be grossly ignorant, or immoral, or

\* Act 8th Assembly 1732.

profane; they might be episcopalian, or infidel, or any thing, provided they only bore the general name of protestant; the mere circumstance of their being *heritors* was considered as peculiarly qualifying them, above all other men, for choosing office-bearers for the house of God. That statesmen, who regard the church as a mere engine of government, and who look upon her office-bearers as so many tools ready made for the accomplishment of political purposes, should have sanctioned such an idea, does not at all surprise us; but that ministers of the gospel should have introduced, and urged the adopting of such a measure as the one now mentioned, and should have extolled it as the best possible that could be adopted, does excite astonishment. No other proof is necessary to convince us that, in their administration of church affairs, they were under the influence of a secular spirit. While they took away from the bulk of the Christian people a privilege which scripture allows them, they vested it in a class of men whom neither reason nor scripture recognises as having any particular claim to it, and who, of all classes of men in a parish, are frequently the worst qualified for the proper exercise of it.

Such was the nature of the overture that was transmitted to presbyteries for their sanction; and, in the meantime, they were enjoined to make it the rule of their procedure, until the Assembly should meet.\* When the Supreme Court met, in 1732, reports were given in from forty-nine presbyteries; and the following was the state of opinion expressed by them:—*Thirty-one* presbyteries decidedly rejected the overture; *six* approved of its being passed into a law, without any alterations; and *twelve* gave their sanction to it, on condition that certain material amendments, which they suggested, should be adopted. From *eighteen* presbyteries no reports were received.† It requires no particular skill in arithmetic to be able to say that, in so far as the opinion of the presbyteries was expressed, the decided majority was *against* the overture; and the Assembly, according to the constitution of their own church, ought immediately to have thrown it aside. The ninth act of the General Assembly, 1697, requires, “That

\* Sir Henry Moncrieff Wellwood, in the Appendix to his *Life of Erskine*, (p. 443,) states that the Assembly of 1732 passed this overture into a law, by their own authority, *without transmission to presbyteries*. Such an instance of ignorance with regard to the history of his own church, on the part of one who was for many years looked up to as one of the leaders of the popular party, excites our surprise, and makes us receive, with considerable distrust, other statements which he makes concerning the state of parties at the commencement of the Secession. I would have been inclined to regard it as an oversight, were it not that the Reverend Baronet *repeats* the statement, and makes it the ground-work of some of his reasonings.

† Gib's Display, vol. i. p. 26.

before any General Assembly of this church shall pass any acts which are to be standing rules and constitutions to the church, they be remitted as overtures to the consideration of the several presbyteries, and their opinion and consent be reported by their commissioners to the next Assembly, that they may pass the same into acts, if the more general opinion of the church agree hereto." Admitting the matter to have been doubtful, men of wisdom would have paused before they enacted into a law that which thirty-one presbyteries entirely disapproved of, and which other twelve declared stood in need of material amendment. Whatever portion of wisdom the Assembly of 1732 possessed, it did not appear to be that which "cometh from above;" neither could it be said of it, that it was "peaceable," or "without partiality," or "full of good fruits." The Assembly, by a logic very convenient for those who are resolved on carrying a point, took it for granted, that all the presbyteries who had sent up no reports, were *for* the overture, according to the maxim that *silence gives consent*. It was, moreover, urged by the high churchmen of that period, that though they were required, by the barrier act, to submit to presbyteries any proposed measure, before passing it into a law, yet they were not bound to be guided implicitly by their advice. By such reasonings, the supporters of the overture obtained a majority of the Assembly in its favour, notwithstanding the opposition that was made to it; and it was declared, that henceforward, in all cases when the settlement of vacant parishes devolved upon the presbyteries, this should be the rule that should regulate their procedure. So intent were the prevailing party on carrying their favourite measure, without any amendment, that they would not even agree to restrict the vote of heritors to such as had residence within the parish, or to such as were of the communion of the Church of Scotland. Against the decision of the Assembly adopting the overture, several ministers and elders, amongst whom were Mr. Ebenezer Erskine, and the other brethren with whom the Secession originated, protested; but the Assembly refused to receive their protest, or to enter it upon their record; in consequence of which refusal, the reasons of protest were afterwards extended, and published in the form of a pamphlet, entitled, "Defections of the Church of Scotland, from her Reformation principles, considered."\*

So great was the alarm excited throughout the country by the headstrong and tyrannical conduct of those who, at this period, bore sway in the church courts, that no fewer than forty-two ministers and three elders gave in a representation

\* Brown's MS.

and petition to the Assembly of 1732, in which they enumerated a variety of grievances, and craved redress; but so far were they from obtaining satisfaction, that their representation was not allowed even to be read, whereupon fifteen of the subscribers protested;\* and, as the Assembly would not receive their protest, it was published along with their representation. At the same meeting, a paper, containing similar complaints, and craving similar redress, was presented, signed by upwards of 1,700 persons, who acted without any previous concert with the ministers.† The committee, to whom the paper was presented, having refused to transmit it, the commissioners of the people complained at the bar of the Assembly, when they received the same contemptuous treatment that the ministers had met with: their representation was refused a hearing, against which treatment they protested in the name of their constituents, and took instruments in the hands of a public notary. Such things as these were sufficiently provoking; and we need not wonder that a spirit of indignation should have been roused both amongst ministers and people, when their complaints were disregarded, their petitions rejected, and when those members of Assembly who felt their consciences aggrieved by the unrighteous proceedings of the majority, were denied the privilege of having their dissent or protest recorded.

Amongst the many violent settlements which took place at this period, that of Kinross deserves to be noticed, on account of the outrageous contempt of popular feeling which it displayed, as well as on account of the peculiar severity with which those ministers were treated who refused to concur in the settlement. The parishioners had given a call to a Mr. Francis Craig, but another person (Mr. Stark) had received the presentation. As this latter gentleman had scarcely a single vote, the presbytery of Dunfermline refused to ordain him. The Commission, in the exercise of their omnipotence, appointed a sub-committee to proceed to Kinross and effect the settlement, in spite of the opposition of both the presbytery and people. Against this arbitrary and unconstitutional proceeding of the Commission, complaints and petitions were presented both by the parishioners and by the presbytery to the Assembly; these were, as usual, rejected, and the presbytery were enjoined, "in the high tone of church authority," to enrol and acknowledge Mr. Stark as one of their

\* Amongst this number were the Rev. Messrs. Ebenezer Erskine, Stirling; Alexander Moncrieff, Abernethy; William Wilson, Perth; James Fisher, Kinclaven; Ralph Erskine, Dunfermline; Thomas Mair, Orwell; Thomas Nairn, Abbotshall, &c. &c.

† Gib's Display, vol. i. p. 26.

number; and when Mr. Ralph Erskine and others tendered a protest against this decision, the clerk was prohibited from entering it on the records of the Assembly. The matter did not rest here, for a complaint being made at next meeting of Assembly,\* that the presbytery had refused to enrol Mr. Stark, the recusant brethren were forthwith summoned to the bar of the court, and sharply rebuked for their disobedience; and a committee was appointed to meet with such of the brethren of the Dunfermline presbytery as were in town, and to get Mr. Stark judicially enrolled. The presbytery were, moreover, commanded to encourage and strengthen the hands of Mr. Stark in the work of the ministry,—they were forbidden to offer or receive any protest against his sitting and acting as a member of their court,—they were not to administer sealing ordinances to any of his parishioners without his consent,—and, finally, they were commanded to appear before the Commission, at their meeting in August, to report concerning their own obedience; and the Commission were empowered to inflict the highest censure of the church upon such as should be guilty of disobedience. Upon the principles of strict presbyterian government, the members of the Dunfermline presbytery cannot, in this instance, be vindicated from the charge of contumacy, in refusing compliance with the decision of the Supreme Court; either they ought formally to have declined its authority, as some of them afterwards did, when they joined the Secession, or while they continued to profess subjection, they ought to have obeyed. At the same time, the conduct of the Assembly and of their Commission was arbitrary in a high degree, and peculiarly calculated to excite opposition.

The situation of the faithful ministers of the Church of Scotland was at this time sufficiently distressing. They had the mortification to behold measures, which they considered unscriptural and oppressive, carried by triumphant majorities. Against these measures in vain did they remonstrate and petition: their remonstrances were not listened to, and their petitions were disregarded. They were even denied the common privilege of having their dissent or protest marked, in cases where they felt their consciences materially aggrieved; nay, so high did the predominant party stretch their authority, and so imperious the tone which they assumed, that, in certain instances, the Commission were enjoined to summon before them, and to rebuke, those persons who should offer a protest, and the presbytery who should receive it.† Beyond this,

\* The Assembly of 1733.

† An instance of this occurs in the proceedings of the Assembly, with regard to the Dunfermline presbytery, and the violent settlement of Mr. Stark at

ecclesiastical despotism had but one step farther to advance,—and that was to impose restraint upon ministerial faithfulness in the pulpit. Here also it endeavoured to carry its terrors, and it was the foolish attempt to do so, that led directly to the Secession.

Those ministers who belonged to the popular party, considered it their duty to testify from the pulpit against those measures, which they deemed injurious to the interests of religion, but which they had not sufficient influence to prevent from being carried in the church courts. This was a privilege which the ministers of Scotland had long claimed and enjoyed; and though, certainly, like every other privilege, it is liable to be abused, and requires much delicacy and judgment to use it aright; yet there can be no doubt, that, in some of the past periods of our history, the exercise of it by faithful ministers has been productive of much benefit both to the church and to the country: And if any period can be mentioned, in which ministerial freedom, in this respect, was more allowable than at another, that period was the one to which this part of my narrative refers. The ruling party in the church courts thought otherwise; and as they had previously declared, by an arbitrary enactment, that no protest should be received or recorded against any measure they might be pleased to adopt, however unconstitutional in itself, or hurtful in its tendency; so they were resolved to stretch forth the rod of their authority, with the view of preventing their opponents from exposing their unscriptural proceedings, in the ministrations of the pulpit. Such a practice as this could not but be galling to them, and it was natural for them to endeavour to suppress it. For this purpose, it was necessary that an example should be made of one of the most influential, as well as most obnoxious, of their opponents; so that, by the censure inflicted, others might be deterred from pursuing a similar course.

The individual whom they fixed upon for the purpose of making this experiment, was Mr. Ebenezer Erskine, one of the ministers of Stirling. This person ranked high as a faithful, laborious, and successful preacher of the gospel. The talents which he possessed were of the most popular description; his influence was great, and he was not more distinguished for the

Kinross, already mentioned. The Assembly, with the view of effectually silencing all opposition, passed an act, in which they strictly discharged "the offering, admitting, or receiving any protest or dissent by any member of said presbytery, or other person whatsoever, against the said Mr. Stark's sitting and acting in the presbytery of Dunfermline, as a member thereof, and minister of Kinross." And they empowered the Commission "to summon before them any person or persons, who shall offer any such protest or dissent; and also the said presbytery, if they shall receive or admit the same, and censure the said persons or presbytery, as they shall see cause."—*Act 5th Assembly 1733.*

clear evangelical views which he had of the truth, than for the fearless manner in which he avowed them, and for his intrepidity in defending them. He was beloved and revered by the people, and he was looked up to with respect by an extensive circle of friends in the ministry. In all the questions which had been brought before the Assembly, involving in them the interests of the truth, and the scriptural rights of the people, he had, from his first entrance into the ministry, uniformly espoused the popular side, and had ever shown himself a keen opponent of the secularizing and arbitrary measures pursued by the court party. He had taken an active part in the Marrow controversy; and, in the process carried on against Professor Simson, he had done what he could to strengthen the hands of those who were contending for the truth. Repeatedly had the shafts of calumny been directed against him, with the view of injuring his character, and destroying his usefulness. Already had he, when a minister in Fife, been accused, first before the Synod, and next before the Commission of the General Assembly, of teaching doctrines inconsistent with the Confession of Faith; by which his accusers meant the obnoxious doctrines of the Marrow.

That a person of Mr. Erskine's character and influence should be obnoxious to those who could not brook opposition to their measures, and that they should be desirous of an opportunity to check his boldness, was natural. Such an opportunity was furnished by a sermon which he preached at Perth, at the opening of the Synod of Perth and Stirling, on the 10th of October, 1732. The subject of his discourse was Psalm cxviii. 22, "The Stone which the builders refused is become the head of the corner." In this discourse, Mr. Erskine, when describing the wicked conduct of the Jewish priests and rulers during the period of Christ's personal ministry, made some pointed allusions to the late transactions of the General Assembly, and to the state of affairs in general throughout the Scottish Church; at the same time, his statements were so carefully guarded, that there was nothing personal in them; but each individual of his hearers was left to make an application of them to his own conscience. The sermon, which has long been before the public, contains in it no uncommon display of talent; but is chiefly distinguished as being a clear, faithful, and practical exposition of the text, and by its peculiar appropriateness to the circumstances in which it was preached.

Several members of Synod were highly offended with the freedom which Mr. Erskine had used in his discourse; and after the court was constituted, and a new Moderator chosen, a formal complaint was made upon the subject. Mr. Adam

Ferguson, minister at Logierait, who took the lead in the business, moved for investigation. He was immediately supported in his proposal by Mr. James Mercer, minister at Aberdalgie; Mr. James Mackie, minister at Forteviot (afterwards at St. Ninians); and the Laird of Glendoig, ruling elder.\* After a long discussion, the synod agreed to take the matter under consideration; and a committee was appointed to collect the passages which had given offence, and to lay them before the court at their next sederunt. The committee, before preparing a report, appointed four of their number (viz. Messrs. William Moncrieff, William Stewart, Alexander M'Lagan, ministers, and the Laird of Glendoig) to wait upon Mr. Erskine, and to tell him, "That some expressions in his sermon gave offence, and to condescend upon some particulars uttered by him in his said sermon that did so; and to deal with him, to see if he will acknowledge he was in the wrong in emitting such expressions, and will promise, before the synod, that he will not express himself, on public occasions, in time coming, after that manner." Mr. Erskine gave a decided negative to the proposal of the committee, stating that his mind was completely made up on these points.

On the following day, the committee presented their report to the synod, and along with it they laid on the table a paper containing the objectionable passages of Mr. Erskine's discourse, with their own remarks upon them. In laying these passages before my readers, it is unnecessary to premise that, being noted down from recollection by individual members of the committee, the words employed by the committee are not exactly the same as those which Mr. Erskine employed in delivering the sermon. They were the following:—

1. That in mentioning the corruptions and degeneracies of the Jewish priests, Mr. Erskine said, "that he left it to the consciences of every one to judge what of these corruptions were to be found among ourselves at this day."

2. That, speaking of the corrupt notions of the Messiah's kingdom entertained by the Jewish teachers, he subjoined, "that he might be allowed to say, that mistaken notions of the kingdom of Jesus Christ, was the ground of many things which were wrong amongst us at this day."

\* Ferrier's Memoirs of the Rev. William Wilson, p. 196. The following extract shows what was the opinion which Mr. Wilson entertained of these men who took the lead in this business. Of Mr. Mercer he says, that he was "a hot, violent man,—a plague on the Presbytery of Perth, and most active always in a bad cause." Mr. Mackie he characterizes as "a man more smooth and subtle than his brother, but his hand still as deep in a course of defection." The Laird of Glendoig, he says, "is a man that follows the fashion of the present time; his principles and conduct in the judicatories appear to be of a piece."

3. That, in characterizing the Jewish teachers, he said, "that they, being connected with the great, trampled upon the people as an unhallowed mob."

4. "That it was a great crime to intrude into that office (of a minister) without a mission; that in order to one's being accounted a builder, there were two things necessary—the call of God and the call of the church; that they who had not the call of the church should be looked on as thieves and robbers; and that this call ought not to be by the heritors, or any other set of men, but by the whole church."

5. "That this was a natural right that every society had, to choose servants for themselves; and that it would be counted a great bondage and servitude upon any family, if foreigners were to choose servants for them; and that certainly the church had the power of choosing her own ministers, seeing that they were the freest society upon earth."

6. After mentioning the encroachments that had been made on Christ's kingly office in the times of popery and prelacy, he said, "That after the late wonderful Revolution, by which our church was delivered, it might have been expected that this church would have given some testimony of these encroachments; but that he did not remember ever they had made an act asserting the headship of our Lord Jesus Christ since the Revolution."

7. Speaking of the encroachments which had been made on Christ's kingly office, and the rights of the people since the Revolution, he said, "That a cry had gone up to heaven about these things in the words of the Spouse, 'That the watchmen that went about the city had found her, and taken away her vail from her, and smote her:' that this cry came before the bar of the last General Assembly; but that, instead of redressing this and other grievances, they increased them, by lodging the power of election in the hands of heritors and elders, excluding the people, whereby Christ was deeply wounded in his members." He further added, "that whatever church authority there was in that act, there was nothing of the authority of the Head of the church; that he was sure that it had no foundation in Scripture, where there is no distinction, in spiritual matters, made betwixt the rich man with the gold ring and the gay clothing, and the poor man." And he concluded with this, "That if Christ were personally present, (and I being here by the appointment of the Synod, am in his stead,) I say, were Christ personally present, he would say to you, 'Forasmuch as you have done it to one of these little ones, you have done it to me.'"

8. In the end of his discourse, he gave this advice to ministers, "Not to be as dumb dogs, when their fellow-builders go

wrong; and though this will offend, yet he said, he behoved to speak."

These were the whole of the objectionable passages which the committee laid before the Synod; and by the remarks which accompanied them, they attempted to found upon them the following charges against Mr. Erskine:—

1. "That the strain of a great part of the sermon appears to compare the ministers of this church with the most corrupt teachers under the Old Testament."

2. "He refuses that any minister had God's call, who had only a call from the heritors, or any other set of men: by which he excludes the whole ministers of the Church of Scotland, and himself among them, from having the call of God, the body of Christians having never been allowed to vote in the election of a minister."

3. "He charges our forefathers with a sinful silence or negligence."

4. "That he spoke disrespectfully of the act of Assembly, lodging the power of election in heritors and elders."\*

Mr. Erskine requested that he might be favoured with a copy of the committee's report, as he intended to prepare a written defence. This was denied him. It was with difficulty, and after a vote of the Synod, that he was permitted to obtain even a sight of it in the clerk's hands.

When the Synod entered upon the consideration of the committee's report, Mr. Erskine read a paper containing answers to the above charges. In answer to the first charge, he said, "This charge is not, and cannot be proven by any passages in my discourse; for I know there is a great body of faithful ministers in the Church of Scotland, with whom I do not reckon myself worthy to be compared. As for the particulars alleged to support this charge, I shall only say, that I reckon it the duty of every faithful minister, when he is dispensing the pure truths of God, to exhort his hearers to make application of what is said to themselves; and I do not think, that ministers themselves, when hearers of the word of God, are beyond such an exhortation. As for what I advanced with relation to the mistaken notions of the kingdom

\* These extracts have been taken from "*A Narrative of the procedure of the Judicatories of the Church of Scotland, with relation to Mr. Ebenezer Erskine, and other ministers who have seceded from the said church:*" published by order of the General Assembly in 1739. The charges founded on these passages, and Mr. Erskine's answers to the charges, have been taken from the same official document. Of course, such an authority will be deemed sufficiently valid by all the friends of the Establishment, and in quoting it as one of my chief authorities, in giving an account of the origin of the Secession, I shall not be accused of undue partiality to Mr. Erskine and his associates.

of Christ, 'which is not of this world,' lying at the bottom of the evils and corruptions of the day: This I own as a truth, but do not think it proves the charge; neither was it ever expressed by me with such a view."

In answering the second charge, he stated, that the words, on which this charge was founded, were not given by the committee as they had been uttered by him in the pulpit, when delivering the discourse. The passage was to the following effect:—"There is a twofold call necessary for a minister meddling as a builder in the church of God; there is the call of God, and of his church. God's call consists in his qualifying a man for the work, and in his inspiring him with a holy zeal and desire to employ these qualifications for the glory of God and the good of his church. The call of the church lies in the free call and election of the Christian people. The promise of conduct and counsel in the choice of men that are to build, is not made to patrons, heritors, or any other set of men, but to the church, the body of Christ, to whom apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers are given. As it is a natural privilege of every house or society of men to have the choice of their own servants or officers, so it is the privilege of the house of God in a particular manner. What a miserable bondage would it be reckoned for any family to have stewards or servants imposed upon them by strangers, who might give the children a stone for bread, or a scorpion instead of a fish, poison instead of medicine? And shall we suppose that ever God granted a power to any set of men, patrons, heritors, or whatever they be,—a power to impose servants on his family, without his own consent, they being the freest society in the world?" In repelling the charge founded upon this passage, he said, "I adhere to my notes on this head as the truths of God; but deny they infer the charge of my looking upon all the ministers of this church as thieves and robbers; for I know that a vast many of them have both God's call and the church's call: But as for these violent settlements that have taken place since the patronage act, I cannot think upon them as warranted by the word of God." "With regard to the remark, 'That the call of a minister ought not to be by the heritors or any other set of men; and refused, that any minister had God's call, who had only a call from the heritors, by which he evidently excludes the whole ministers of the Church of Scotland, and himself among them, from having the call of God, the body of Christians having never been allowed to vote in the election of a minister,' I answer, I own that the call of a minister ought not to be by heritors *as such*; in regard that no such titles or distinctions of men are known in the kingdom of Christ; the

only heritors that are there are they that are *rich in faith*, they being heirs of the kingdom; these are they that are precious in the sight of God, and honourable; and I am of opinion, that, in dispensing the privileges of Christ's kingdom, we ought to put honour and value upon men, not upon the account of their worldly heritages, but as they are valuable in the sight of God, and as his image is to be found upon them." He further added, on this point, "I think that I have good reason to refuse, that any minister has God's call, who has only a call from the heritors, *renitente et contradicente ecclesia* (with a reclaiming and an opposing congregation); yet, notwithstanding, I do not hereby exclude the whole ministers of the Church of Scotland, nor myself among them, from having the call of God, in regard, that from the Revolution till the act of patronage came to be in force, I know of no settlements but where the body of the Christian people concurred in the election of their minister, and in the practice of the church, till of late, they were allowed to vote; yea, to my certain knowledge, in the south of Scotland, presbyteries and other judicatories, with the Christian people, wrestled jointly for the settlement of congregations, in opposition to malignant and disaffected heritors."

In reference to the third charge preferred against him, viz. having charged the forefathers of the Scottish Church with a sinful silence or negligence, he said, "Although I have a very great regard for the instruments of our deliverance at the Revolution, particularly the godly ministers who survived the flood of persecuting tyranny, and my own father among the rest, yet I hope the reverend synod will excuse me, though I do not look upon these earthly ministers, or these that have succeeded them to this day, as infallible. But if the reverend synod can any where show this headship and sovereignty of his (of Christ), being asserted by any particular act of Assembly since the Revolution, in opposition to these encroachments, I shall very willingly own my mistake; but if not, I humbly move, that the reverend synod may address the ensuing Assembly for supplying that defect."

In noticing the fourth charge above mentioned, concerning the remarks which he had made on the act of Assembly 1732, lodging the power of election in heritors and elders, he said,—“I cannot, and dare not, retract my testimony against it, either before the Assembly, the day after it was passed into an act, or by what I said in my sermon before this reverend synod, in regard I cannot see the authority of the King of Zion giving warrant to confer the power of voting in the election of ministers, upon heritors, beyond other Christians, especially when, in the said act, heritors disaffected to

church and state were put upon a level with those of our own communion, and I shall be sorry if this act of our Assembly be made a term of our ministerial communion.”\*

After the committee had presented their report, and Mr. Erskine had been heard in reply to the statements which it contained, a keen and protracted debate ensued, which terminated in the synod finding (by a majority of six votes) Mr. Erskine censurable for the expressions which he had uttered in his sermon. Against this sentence, Mr. Alexander Moncrieff, minister at Abernethy, and Mr. William Wilson, minister at Perth, with ten other ministers, and two ruling elders, protested. Mr. Erskine, and his son-in-law, Mr. James Fisher, minister at Kinclaven (who, on account of his relationship to Mr. Erskine, was not permitted to vote), also protested, and appealed to the General Assembly.†

The synod followed up this decision by another, viz.—“Rebuke Mr. Erskine, and admonish him to behave orderly for the future; and appoint the presbytery of Stirling to inquire anent his after-behaviour at their privy censures, and report to the next synod.” Mr. Erskine having retired from the house immediately after he had given in his protest, the rebuke could not be administered. The synod resolved to call him on the following day, and Mr. Erskine not then appearing, they agreed to call him at their meeting in April, to be rebuked and admonished.‡

When the synod met at Stirling, on the 12th of April, 1733, this business was resumed. Of the twelve ministers who had protested at the former meeting, only seven were present; and these gave in their reasons of dissent, in which they stated that, while they did not mean to vindicate every expression that Mr. Erskine had used in his discourse, yet they thought that a distinction ought to be made betwixt the matter and the mode of his expressions. They further declared, that the ground of their not acquiescing in the decision of the synod was, that it appeared to them, that the chief reason why the synod had pronounced a sentence of condemnation upon Mr. Erskine, was his testifying against the act of 1732, which they considered to be equivalent to imposing a new term of ministerial communion, viz. that no minister shall be permitted, even in a discourse delivered before his brethren, to testify against any act, of the sinfulness of which he may be convinced. Notwithstanding the efforts made by Mr. Erskine's friends to get the matter amicably adjusted, the synod insisted on the rebuke being adminis-

\* Narrative of the Proceedings, &c. p. 8—12. † Gib's Display, vol. i. p. 27.

‡ Narrative, p. 12.

tered unless Mr. Erskine should make some acknowledgment of the impropriety of the expressions which he had used. Mr. Erskine, on the other hand, would not retract a single statement which he had made; and when called upon by the moderator, to receive the rebuke, he read a paper stating that he still adhered to his former protest, and that he was not convinced of having either said or done any thing that constituted a just ground of censure.\* At this meeting, a petition was presented from several of the elders of Stirling, in favour of their minister; but the committee of bills would not transmit it, and the synod refused to give it even a hearing.

At the meeting of the Assembly, in the month of May, only three of the protesters against the deed of synod appeared, viz. Messrs. William Wilson, Alexander Moncrieff, and James Fisher. Mr. Wilson and Mr. Moncrieff pled that they might be heard at the bar of the Assembly, in support of their reasons of protest; but, upon what grounds I am at a loss to conceive, this request was not granted. Mr. Fisher also requested that he might be heard, but he too was refused a hearing by the Assembly.†

He had protested against the sentence of the synod, on the ground that it was not only prejudicial to Mr. Erskine, but injurious to the truths of God's word; but the committee of bills refused to transmit his reasons of appeal, arbitrarily pronouncing concerning his conduct, that he had intruded himself into the process, not so much for the sake of vindicating the truth, as on account of his connexion with Mr. Erskine.

On the 14th of May, the Assembly entered on the consideration of Mr. Erskine's protest. Mr. Erskine appeared at the bar, attended by two advocates. Several members of Synod appeared in support of the Synod's sentence. After a variety of papers connected with the process had been read, and parties heard, the Assembly pronounced the following decision:—"The Assembly find the expressions vented by Mr. Erskine, and contained in the minutes of the Synod's proceedings, with the answers thereto, made by him, to be offensive, and to tend to disturb the peace and good order of this church: therefore, they approve of the proceedings of the Synod, and appoint him to be rebuked and admonished by the moderator, at their own bar, in order to terminate the process."‡ After this sentence was pronounced, the moderator, at the desire of the Assembly, gave thanks to the members of synod "for their care and diligence in this matter;" and, in

\* Gib's Display, vol. i. p. 404.

† Ibid. vol. i. p. 27.

‡ Act 7th Assembly 1733.

terms of the sentence, he rebuked and admonished Mr. Erskine from the chair.\*

Mr. Erskine declared that he could not submit, in silence, to the rebuke and admonition which had been tendered to him, as he was not convinced of having done any thing that deserved censure. He also presented a written protest against the sentence, to which the three brethren already mentioned subscribed an adherence, and he craved that the paper might be read, and recorded in the minutes of the Assembly. This paper was to the following effect:—

“Although I have a very great and dutiful regard to the judicatories of this church, to whom I own my subjection in the Lord; yet, in respect the Assembly have found me censurable, and have tendered a rebuke and admonition to me, for things I conceive agreeable unto, and founded upon, the word of God, and our approven standards, I find myself obliged to protest against the said censure, as importing that I have, in my doctrine at the opening of the synod at Perth, October last, departed from the word of God, and the foresaid standards; and that I shall be at liberty to preach the same truths of God, and to testify against the same or like defections of this church, upon all proper occasions. And I do hereby adhere unto the testimonies I have formerly emitted against the act of Assembly 1732, whether in the protest entered against it in open Assembly, or yet in my synodical sermon, craving this my protest and declaration to be insert in the records of the Assembly, and that I may be allowed extracts thereof.

“*May 14, 1733.*

EBENEZER ERSKINE.”

“We, under-subscribing ministers, dissenters from the sentence of the Synod of Perth and Stirling, do hereby adhere to the above protestation and declaration, containing a testimony against the act of Assembly 1732, and asserting our privilege and duty to testify publicly against the same or like defections, upon all proper occasions.

“WILLIAM WILSON,  
ALEX. MONCRIEFF.”

“I, Mr. James Fisher, minister at Kinclaven, appellant against the sentence of the Synod of Perth, in this question, although the committee of bills did not think fit to transmit my reasons of appeal, find myself obliged to adhere unto the foresaid protestation and declaration.

“JAMES FISHER.”

\* Narrative, &c. p. 43.

When Mr. Erskine presented this paper, the Assembly would not permit it to be read. They urged upon him the irregularity and the danger of such a practice; and they insisted on his withdrawing the protest. This he refused to do; and, having left the paper lying on the table, he and the three dissenting brethren left the Assembly.\* Here the business would, in all probability, have terminated, as it does not appear that, at this period, Mr. Erskine, and the brethren who acted along with him, had any intention of leaving the communion of the national church. Notwithstanding the corruptions which prevailed in her, they still cherished toward her a filial affection. Connected with her, there was much which they regarded with veneration. Having been brought up within her pale, and having long enjoyed ministerial and Christian intercourse with the men of worth and piety that were to be found in her bosom, their earliest and most pleasing associations must have pled powerfully with them on her behalf; and provided they were permitted to protest, when they saw cause, against the unconstitutional and unscriptural proceedings of the prevailing party; provided also they were permitted to testify in public against the corruptions that marred the beauty of their Zion, they were still willing to continue in her fellowship. But an overruling Providence had ordered it otherwise. These good men were driven violently onward, step by step, by the tyrannical measures of those who were opposed to them, until at length they were compelled formally to declare a secession from a church, which, with all its faults, they loved.

The paper which Mr. Erskine threw down, before leaving the Assembly, was accidentally tossed over the table, and there it lay unheeded for some time, until a minister,† who was sitting beside the table, picked it up, and, perusing the contents of it, his indignation was roused to its highest pitch. He immediately rose with a countenance flushed with anger, and insisted that the Assembly should stop their proceedings, and consider the insult which had been offered to them by such a paper having been laid upon their table. This appeal to their dignity had the effect which Mr. Erskine's appeal to their justice had failed to produce, viz. causing the paper to be read. Upon hearing the contents of it, the whole Assembly was in an uproar. A paper containing high treason against the sovereign, or blasphemy against the Majesty of

\* Display, vol. i. p. 27.

† Mr. Gib, in a manuscript note written by himself on a copy of the Display, says, that the person who picked up Mr. Erskine's protest, and called the attention of the Assembly to it, was Mr. James Naamith, minister at Dalmeny, "a fiery man (he adds) in the corrupt measures of that time."

heaven, could not have called forth a greater burst of indignation. The officer was ordered to go in quest of the four brethren whose joint production had excited such an uproar, and to summon them to appear at the bar of the court next forenoon, to answer for such audacious conduct ;\* and in the mean time, a committee was appointed to consider the protests, and to report to the Assembly what was most befitting to be done in this extraordinary case.

Next forenoon, the ministers, in compliance with the summons, appeared in the court, and before any farther measures were adopted, a committee was appointed to retire with the offending brethren, and to endeavour to persuade them to withdraw their paper, but without effect ; the ministers declared that their minds were fully made up, and that they were firmly resolved to adhere. The committee having given in their report, the Assembly, by a great majority, adopted the following overture, which their committee had prepared :—“ The General Assembly ordains, that the four brethren appear before the Commission in August next, and then show their sorrow for their conduct and misbehaviour, in offering to protest, and in giving in to this Assembly the paper by them subscribed, and that they then retract the same. And in case they do not appear before the said Commission in August, and then show their sorrow, and retract, as said is, the Commission is hereby empowered and appointed to suspend the said brethren, or such of them as shall not obey, from the exercise of their ministry. And, further, in case the said brethren shall be suspended by the said Commission, and that they shall act contrary to the said sentence of suspension, the Commission is hereby empowered and appointed, at their meeting in November, or any subsequent meeting, to proceed to a higher censure against the said four brethren, or such of them as shall continue to offend by transgressing this act. And the General Assembly do appoint the several presbyteries, of which the said brethren are members, to report to the Commission in August, and subsequent meetings of it, their conduct and behaviour with respect to this act.”†

After this sentence was pronounced, the brethren attempted to read a short paper which they had prepared as a declaration of their joint sentiments ; but when they commenced

\* Such is the account given by one who was an eye-witness of the whole transaction, viz. Mr. Adam Gib. He was then a student at the University of Edinburgh, and for some years was a regular attendant upon the meetings of the General Assembly ; and it was the disgust which he received from contemplating their proceedings previously to this period, that led him, in the winter of 1732, to renounce his connexion with the Established Church, even before the Secession commenced.—*Display*, vol. i. p. 29.

† Minutes of Assembly, 1733.

reading it, the Assembly ordered their officer to remove them. The substance of their declaration was as follows :—"In regard the venerable Assembly have come to a positive sentence, without hearing our defences, and have appointed the Commission to execute their sentence in August, in case we do not retract what we have done; we cannot but complain of this uncommon procedure, and declare that we are not at liberty to take this affair to an *avisandum*." Not being permitted to read this paper, they left it on the table, under a protest, and withdrew.\*

It may well be supposed, that such proceedings as these could not take place without exciting a great ferment throughout the country. The imperious conduct of the Assembly, the high popularity of the ministers who had been censured, and the firmness which they displayed in vindicating their own privileges, as well as in asserting the scriptural rights of the people, drew toward them the good wishes of a large portion of the most pious part of the community. All eyes were now turned toward the meeting of the Commission in August, as upon its proceedings depended, in a great measure, the future integrity or disruption of the Scottish Church.

When the Commission met, the four brethren appeared before them, having previously prepared written defences. Upon their appearance at the bar, the Commission intimated to them, that they had resolved not to read any papers that might be presented by them, either severally or conjunctly, and that they must answer such questions as were proposed to them *separately* and *viva voce*. In reply to this intimation, the brethren stated, that they were all included in the condemnatory sentence of the Assembly, that their cause was one and the same, and that they insisted upon their right of choosing whether they should make their defence by *word* or by *writ*. They then presented, under form of instrument, two representations, one by Mr. Erskine and Mr. Fisher, as appellants from the sentence of the synod of Perth and Stirling, and another by Mr. Wilson and Mr. Moncrieff, as protesters against that sentence. The Commission, disregarding these representations, and adhering to their resolution, commanded all the brethren to retire, except Mr. Erskine; and they forthwith proceeded to interrogate him. He was asked, whether he was sorry for protesting against the authority of the last Assembly, and if he now retracted his protests? To which he replied, "He was indeed sorry that what he had done should be interpreted by any as a contempt of the authority of the judicatories of this church, no such thing

\* A Testimony to the Doctrine, Worship, &c., p. 12.

being intended by his protest, but only a solemn adherence to the truths of God delivered in his synodical sermon, for the emitting of which he had been rebuked and admonished solemnly at the Assembly's bar, as though he had vented some notorious error or heresy. And with respect to the question now proposed, whether he retracted his protestation, he and his three brethren had had that matter under their serious consideration ever since the last Assembly, and accordingly had drawn up their deliberate answers in writ, which were now lying upon the table, and therefore craved they might be read." The Moderator told him, that the Commission had resolved to read none of their papers, but that they must answer the above question *viva voce*. Mr. Erskine replied, "That he judged it the privilege of any man sisted before a court, civil or ecclesiastical, to choose which of the ways he thought proper for his own defence, whether by word or writ; and that they being a body of men joined together in the same cause, had agreed upon their joint written and subscribed answers; and, for his own part, he did not incline to give up this privilege, and therefore again referred to his written answer." He was then asked, whether his paper was a retraction of his protest or not; his reply was, "That the court was abundantly capable to judge upon their reading his answer."\*

After some time had been spent to no purpose, in urging Mr. Erskine to retract his protest, and to acknowledge his sorrow for his conduct, he was removed; and a debate then ensued whether or not the representation, which had been given in by him and Mr. Fisher, should be read. In this instance, the Commission showed that their decrees were not, like those of the Medes and Persians, unalterable, for it was decided, by a great majority, that the paper should be read. Mr. Erskine was again called in, and permitted to read his representation; and after having done so, he laid it upon the table. The Commission desired him to take it with him, but he refused, stating, that as he had presented it under a protest, it was necessary that it should be engrossed in the process, for the vindication of himself and of his brethren.

The following is the account which Mr. Gib gives of this scene:—"I saw," says he, "Mr. Ebenezer Erskine then standing at the bar in a most easy and undaunted, yea, majestic appearance, amidst warm and brow-beating reasonings against the refusal which he then made, particularly by the Earl of Isla. Before the Commission found themselves obliged to reverse their forenoon's resolution against receiving any

\* Preface to the Representations of Eben. Erskine, &c., p. iv.

written answers to their question, and before what is narrated in the preface to the representations, a proposal was agreed in for allowing him to read such parts of his representation as contained a direct answer to their question. The paper being then handed over to him, he entered upon the reading of it, beginning with the address and title. The Moderator immediately stopped him, telling him that he was to read only such parts as contained a direct answer to the question. Mr. Erskine replied, that these would come in due order. This produced new reasonings, which issued in his being allowed to read the whole paper; and he did so in a very deliberate manner, and with a very audible voice: Mr. Archibald Rennie, who was next year intruded into the parish of Muckhart, holding the candle to him, as it was then late.\*

Mr. Fisher was then called to the bar, and the question was proposed to him, If he was sorry for his conduct in adhering to the protest given in by Mr. Ebenezer Erskine to the last General Assembly, and if he would now retract the same? To which he replied, "Although I sincerely declare that I do not design, by the protestation given in against the decision of the last Assembly, to impugn the power and authority of the General Assembly to censure any of the ministers and members of this church, upon just and relevant grounds, or the exercise of that power and authority according to the word of God, and the known principles of this church; yet I am not sensible of any just ground of offence I have given by my conduct before the last Assembly, and therefore cannot declare my sorrow for it, nor retract the said protestation; but find it my duty to adhere thereunto, and to the papers given in this day under form of instrument."†

Mr. Wilson and Mr. Moncrieff were next interrogated, as to their willingness to withdraw their protest, and express their sorrow; when they referred to their signed representation, as containing their answer, and craved that it might be read. Instead of granting this request, the Commission appointed a committee to meet with Mr. Erskine and his friends, with the view of bringing them, if possible, to a more submissive state of mind.‡ After a conference of two or three hours, the committee reported, that the brethren refused to retract their protest, or to declare their sorrow for the same;—and the Moderator having inquired at Mr. Wilson and

\* MS. note written by Mr. Gib on a copy of the Display.

† Minutes of the Commission.

‡ This Committee consisted of the following persons:—The Moderator, Principal Campbell, Principal Smith, Principal Haddow, Mr. John Matheson, Mr. Matthew Connel, Mr. James Nasmyth, and Mr. John Orr, ministers; the Lord Advocate, Lord Grange, Lord Dunmore, Mr. Solicitor Erskine, and Mr. James Boswell of Auchencleck, ruling elders.

Mr. Moncrieff, if they agreed to the truth of said report, they answered in the affirmative. The Commission, considering this a sufficient answer to the question which they at first proposed, refused to hear these two brethren read their representation; but allowed them to state, *viva voce*, any reasons they might have for refusing to withdraw their protest. Having made their statement, they concluded with the following declaration, in which they were joined by Mr. Erskine and Mr. Fisher;—"That any sentence of suspension, or of a higher nature, that should be inflicted upon them, should be held and reputed as *null and void* in itself; and that it should be lawful and warrantable for them to exercise their ministry as hitherto they had done, and as if no such censure had been inflicted upon them, in regard they were not convicted of departing from any of the received principles of this church, or of counteracting their ordinary vows and engagements; but, on the contrary, were sentenced to censure by the late General Assembly, for protesting against a decision whereby injury was done to some truths of God, which they were obliged to own and confess; and whereby they were brought under *new and unwarrantable terms of ministerial communion*, inconsistent with the word of God, and their ordination vows and engagements."\*

Petitions were presented to the Commission from the presbyteries of Stirling, Dunblane, and Ellon; also from the Magistrates, Town-councils, and Kirk-sessions of Perth and Stirling, craving a delay of the execution of the Assembly's sentence against Mr. Erskine and his friends: but the Commission refused to hear these petitions, because they did not consider that the parties presenting them had any proper interest in the question. A considerable number of the Commission were for delay, but the majority insisted that the sentence of the Assembly was peremptory, and that they had no option left them, in the circumstances of the case, but to carry it into effect. After some discussion, a vote was stated, *Suspend the four protesting brethren from the exercise of the ministerial functions, and all the parts thereof*, or, *Delay this affair*? It carried, *Suspend*. From this decision several members of Commission, both ministers and elders, dissented.†

The four brethren were then called to the bar, and the sentence of *Suspension* was intimated to them, when they gave in the

\* A Testimony to the Doctrine, &c. p. 15.

† The names of those who dissented were, Mr. Henry Lindsay, Mr. Alexander Wardrop, and Mr. James M'Garroch, ministers; Colonel John Erskine of Carnock, Mr. Alexander Bruce of Kennet, and Mr. Albert Monro of Coull, ruling elders.

following protestation :—" We hereby adhere to the protestations taken by us before this court, for ourselves, and in the name of all the ministers, elders, and members of the Church of Scotland, and of all and every one in our respective congregations, adhering to us ; bearing, that this sentence is in itself null and void ; and that it shall be lawful and warrantable for us to exercise our ministry, as hitherto we have done, and as if no such censure had been inflicted : And that, if, in consequence of this sentence, any minister or probationer shall exercise any part of our pastoral work, the same shall be held and reputed as a violent intrusion upon our ministerial labours. And we do hereby protest for extracts of the papers given in by us, and of the whole of the Commission's procedure against us ; and hereupon we take instruments.

" EBENEZER ERSKINE.  
WILLIAM WILSON.  
ALEXR. MONCRIEFF.  
JAMES FISHER."

The harsh and imperious treatment, which these good men received, first from the Assembly and next from the Commission, excited a strong feeling of sympathy in their favour. If they were popular before, the usage which they had received made them still more so. Not only their sessions and flocks clung to them with a most affectionate attachment, but several synods and presbyteries lifted up their voice on their behalf. The Assembly had ordered, that, if they did not obey the sentence of the Commission, suspending them from the exercise of their office, the Commission should, at their next meeting in November, inflict upon them a higher censure. This meeting, therefore, was looked forward to with great anxiety, as the suspended brethren had, by virtue of their protest, continued to exercise their ministry as formerly. On the 14th of November, the Commission again met. So great was the interest excited among the inhabitants of Edinburgh, that long before the hour of meeting, the doors leading to the Assembly aisle were beset by crowds of people anxious to obtain admission ; and it was not till the magistrates interfered, that the members could find an entrance. Mr. Erskine and his three friends, in compliance with the summons which they had received, presented themselves at the bar of the Commission, and were about to read a paper, when they were interrupted. The paper was then laid on the table, and was to the following effect :—

" Edinburgh, November 14th, 1733.— We do hereby protest, that our present appearance before the Commission shall not be construed a falling from the declarations we emitted,

and the protestations entered, both before and after the executing of the sentence of suspension against us by the Commission, at their meeting in August last. To which protestations and representations, given in by us to the said Commission, we still adhere ; and hereupon take instruments.

“ EBENEZER ERSKINE.

WILLIAM WILSON.

ALEXANDER MONCRIEFF.

JAMES FISHER.”

A committee was appointed to converse with the brethren, and to induce them to retract their protest.\* In the afternoon the committee reported that they had been unsuccessful in their endeavours, and that the brethren were still resolved to adhere. The protesting ministers were then asked, *If they had obeyed the sentence of the Commission in August last suspending them from the exercise of their ministry?* They all replied, *That they had not.* That as they had protested, both before and after the said sentence of suspension was executed upon them, that it should be held and reputed null and void, for the reasons contained in their several representations ; so they had exercised all the parts of their ministerial office, as if they had been under no such censure.

At this meeting of the Commission, no fewer than seven synods sent up communications in favour of the suspended ministers.† Six of them craved that the Commission would delay proceeding to a higher censure, and one of them pled, that the ministers might be treated with tenderness and lenity. Petitions to a similar effect were presented from the presbyteries of Dornoch and Aberdeen. The latter of these presbyteries did not hesitate to tell the Commission, “ That they judged the sentence of suspension, inflicted upon the foresaid ministers, was too high, and that it was a stretching of church authority.” These representations and petitions were supported by a considerable number of the members of Commission, who insisted strongly for delay, and argued that the sentence of the Assembly did not make it imperative on

\* This committee consisted of the following persons:—The Moderator, Principal Smith, Principal Chalmers, Professor Crawford, Mr. John Methven, Mr. James Mackie, Mr. James Mercer, Mr. James Robertson, Mr. Robert Bell, and Mr. James Walker, ministers ; the Lord Advocate, Mr. Solicitor Erskine, Lord Provost of Edinburgh, Conservator, and Mr. Robert Craigie, ruling elders.

† These synods were the following:—Dumfries, Moray, Ross, Angus and Mearns, Perth and Stirling, Galloway and Fife. The number of synods connected with the Church of Scotland, is fifteen ; and it shows us in what light the sentence of the Commission, suspending the four brethren from the exercise of their ministry, was viewed by their own church, when nearly one-half of the synods presented petitions in their favour.

them to proceed to a higher censure at this meeting. With the view of determining this point, a vote was stated, *Proceed immediately to inflict a higher censure upon the four suspended ministers*; or, *Delay the same till March*? When the roll was called, the votes were found to be equal; and Mr. John Gowdie, one of the ministers of Edinburgh, being moderator, turned the scale against Mr. Erskine and his friends, by giving the casting vote in favour of those who were for proceeding to inflict a higher censure. This decision fixed the fate of the four brethren; for their friends in the Commission, finding that their efforts on their behalf were unavailing, did not urge the matter further; several of them, by marking their dissent, declared that they were free from the evil consequences that might result from such a decision.\* Mr. Ralph Erskine, minister at Dunfermline, and Mr. Thomas Mair, minister at Orwell, presented a paper, with their names affixed to it, declaring that they adhered to the representations which were formerly given in by the four ministers, condemning the harsh measures which were pursued toward them, and protesting that it would be competent for them to hold ministerial and Christian communion with them, notwithstanding any censure that might be inflicted on them by the Commission.

Before the Commission proceeded to inflict the threatened censure, it was moved, on the second day of their meeting, that another committee be appointed to converse with the protesting brethren. This was readily enough agreed to by both parties; and, accordingly, a long conference took place, which lasted from 6 till 10 o'clock in the evening. At this meeting, the following proposal was made by the committee to the ministers, as the basis of an amicable adjustment of the question at issue betwixt them:—"If the next General Assembly shall declare, that it was not meant by the act of the last Assembly, to deny or take away the privilege and duty of ministers to testify against defections, then we shall be at liberty, and willing to withdraw our protest against the said act of Assembly, and particularly, we reserve to ourselves the liberty of testifying against the act of Assembly 1732, on all proper occasions." This proposal being new to the brethren, they requested that they might be allowed to retire for a little, to consider it before they gave their answer; but the committee desired them to take it into their consideration till the next morning, which they consented to do, with the express declar-

\* The members of the Commission who dissented were Mr. Hendry Lindsay, Mr. ——— Lawson, Mr. Hector M'Kenzie, Mr. Peter Philmore, and Mr. Alexander Wardrop, ministers; the Lord Grange, and Colonel Erskine, ruling elders.

ation that their reason for doing so was, that it was late, and that they did not at the time fully understand the import of it.

On the following morning, they gave in their answer to the committee, in writing, which was as follows:—"As to the proposal made by the committee to us, that we should withdraw our protestation, in case a subsequent Assembly should declare that it was not meant by the act and sentence of the last Assembly, in Mr. Erskine's affair, to deny or take away the privilege and duty of ministers to testify against defections. After serious and mature deliberation, we have no freedom to go into the said proposal, and that because the obvious sense and meaning of the said act and sentence appears to us to lay a restraint on ministerial freedom and faithfulness, in testifying against the act of Assembly 1732, and the like defections in this church, upon proper occasions; and, as this was the ground of our protestation, so any declaration that a subsequent Assembly can make, cannot remove the ground upon which we protested against that decision, in regard that an act and declaration of the following Assembly, though agreeable to the word of God, can never take away the ground of protesting against a wrong decision of a preceding Assembly."

The committee having reported that they had not been able to make any impression upon the four brethren; that they continued as obstinate as ever; the Commission proceeded, agreeably to their former decisions, to inflict upon them a higher censure. It was agreed that the following should be the state of the question:—"Loose the relation of the said four ministers to their several charges, and declare them no longer ministers of this church, and prohibit all ministers of this church to employ them in any ministerial function; or, Depose them simpliciter?" And the votes being taken, it carried *Loose* by a great majority.\* "And therefore the Commission of the General Assembly did, and hereby do, loose the relation of Mr. Ebenezer Erskine, minister at Stirling; Mr. William Wilson, minister at Perth; Mr. Alexander Moncrieff, minister at Abernethy; and Mr. James Fisher, minister at Kinclaven, to their said respective charges; and do declare them no longer ministers of this church; and do hereby prohibit all ministers of this church to employ them, or any of them, in any ministerial function. And the Commission do declare the churches of the said Mr. Erskine, Mr. Wilson, Mr. Moncrieff, and Mr. Fisher, vacant from and after the date of this sentence; and appoint that letters from the moderator, and extracts of this sentence, be sent to the several

\* The greatness of the majority was owing to Mr. Erskine's friends not being at liberty to vote either *Loose* or *Depose*, on account of their having previously voted against proceeding to inflict a higher censure.

presbyteries within whose bounds the said ministers have had their charges, appointing them, as they are hereby appointed, to cause intimate this sentence in the foresaid several churches, now declared vacant, any time betwixt and the 1st of January next; and also that notice of this sentence be sent, by letters from the moderator of this Commission, to the magistrates of Perth and Stirling, to the sheriff-principal of Perth, and baillie of the regality of Abernethy.\* And the Commission further agreed to declare that, "in case the said Mr. Ebenezer Erskine, Mr. Wilson, Mr. Moncrieff, and Mr. Fisher, shall behave themselves dutifully and submissively to this sentence, and shall make application to the meeting of the Commission, in March next, and give satisfaction to them, the Commission will then recommend them for favour to the next General Assembly."

Such was the sentence which the Commission recorded in their journal,—a sentence which would not have disgraced the Star Chamber, or the High Court of Commission, when in the zenith of their power. Against this sentence, Mr. Gabriel Wilson, minister at Maxton, entered the following protest:—"Edinburgh, November 16, 1733.—I, Mr. Gabriel Wilson, minister at Maxton, in mine own name, and in name of all those that shall adhere to me, protest against this sentence of the Commission, in the case of the four brethren; and that it may be lawful for me to complain of the said sentence, and of the several acts of Assembly that have occasioned the same, to any subsequent Assembly of the Church of Scotland. As also, that it may be lawful for me, in a becoming manner, on all proper occasions, to bear testimony against the same, with all other defections and severities of this church in her sentences: and finally, that I may, in the mean time, as in providence I shall find opportunity, hold ministerial communion with my said dear brethren, as if no such sentence had been passed against them. Upon all which, I take instruments in the clerk's hands.

"GABRIEL WILSON."

To this protest the following ministers adhered:—Mr. Ralph Erskine, minister at Dunfermline; Mr. Thomas Mair, minister at Orwell; Mr. John M'Laren, minister at Edinburgh; Mr. John Currie, minister at Kinglassie; Mr. James Wardlaw, minister at Dunfermline; and Mr. Thomas Nairn, minister at Abbotshall.

When Mr. Erskine, and the other three brethren were called in, and had the sentence intimated to them by the mo-

\* Minutes of the Commission.

derator, they read the following paper; and, after reading it, they left it in the hands of the clerk, under a protest that it might be engrossed in the minutes.\*

“Edinburgh, November 16, 1733.—We do hereby adhere to the protestations formerly entered before this court, both at their last meeting in August, and when we appeared first before this meeting. And further, we do protest, in our own name, and in the name of all and every one in our respective congregations adhering to us, that, notwithstanding of this sentence passed against us, our pastoral relation shall be held and reputed firm and valid. And likewise we do protest, that, notwithstanding of our being cast out from ministerial communion with the Established Church of Scotland, we still hold communion with all and every one who desire, with us, to adhere to the principles of the true presbyterian, covenanted Church of Scotland, in her doctrine, worship, government, and discipline; and particularly with every one who is groaning under the evils, and who are afflicted with the grievances we have been complaining of; who are, in their several spheres, wrestling against the same. But in regard the prevailing party in this Established Church, who have now cast us out from ministerial communion with them, are carrying on a course of defection from our reformed and covenanted principles; and, particularly, are suppressing ministerial freedom and faithfulness in testifying against the present backslidings of the church, and inflicting censures upon ministers for witnessing, by protestations, and otherwise, against the same. Therefore we do, for these and many other weighty reasons to be laid open in due time, protest, that we are obliged to make a SECESSION from them, and that we can have no ministerial communion with them, till they see their sins and mistakes, and amend them. And, in like manner, we do protest, that it shall be lawful and warrantable for us to exercise the Keys of Doctrine, Discipline, and Government, according to the word of God, and Confession of Faith, and the principles and constitutions of the Church of Scotland, as if no such censure had been passed upon us: Upon all which we take instruments. And we hereby appeal unto the first free, faithful, and reforming General Assembly of the Church of Scotland.

“EBENEZER ERSKINE.

WILLIAM WILSON.

ALEXANDER MONCRIEFF.

JAMES FISHER.”

Here is a formal declaration made of a Secession, not from the Church of Scotland, as such, but from the *prevailing*

\* It was not engrossed.

party in that church, who for some time past had been pursuing measures that were equally opposed to the dictates of scripture and of sound policy. Whatever the intentions of the leaders of this party might be, there can be no doubt that the tendency of the measures which they pursued was to secularize the church, to convert it into a mere engine of state, to banish vital godliness from its precincts, and to extinguish every thing like independence of thought as well as freedom of action, amongst both ministers and people. The despotic nature of their decrees, and the determined spirit which they manifested in carrying them into effect, however violent and just the opposition that might be made to them, had excited, throughout a wide circle, indignation and disgust; and matters were now come to that crisis, that either a resolute stand must be made for the truth, on scriptural grounds, whatever might be the consequences; or conscience and freedom of judgment must be surrendered, by tamely submitting, on all occasions, to tyrannical and unjust enactments. It was the former of these alternatives which the Fathers of the Secession adopted. They had calmly and deliberately surveyed the ground which they meant to occupy. They had, before putting on the harness, counted the cost: and, however fondly attached they might be to the national church, and however much they might love and revere many of her members, with whom they were still desirous to hold communion, yet they were resolved that they would not, on any account, passively acquiesce in measures which their soul abhorred, as dishonouring to God and destructive of religion, and against which they were forbidden, by stern authority, to lift a condemnatory voice. The cause of their Master was dearer to them than any worldly consideration. In the maintenance of it, they were prepared to give up their livings and to renounce their dearest connexions; by it they were resolved, like faithful servants, to stand or fall.

It will be proper, at this stage of the narrative, to pause, and take a review of the proceedings of the Assembly and Commission toward these intrepid men; that we may see how harsh and unjust was the treatment which they received, and what good grounds they had for withdrawing from the communion of a church, where they had imposed upon them the painful alternative, either of silently submitting to the grossest abuses, or of being subjected, on account of their fidelity, to the severest censures.

Mr. Ebenezer Erskine, and the other Fathers of the Secession who acted along with him, have been frequently represented as factious demagogues, as violent schismatics, as turbulent, discontented men, whose ruling passion was a

love of popularity, and who abandoned the national church, that they might gratify their ambition by being at the head of a new sect. Nothing can be farther from the truth than the view that has been thus given of the character and motives of these excellent men. Such a charge could originate only in ignorance of their history, or in a wilful misrepresentation of the circumstances in which the Secession commenced. Mr. Erskine and his friends did not at first *voluntarily* leave the Church of Scotland: they *were driven out* of her communion. A sentence was pronounced against them, declaring that their relation with the national church was dissolved. On what ground? Because they entered their protest against what they deemed an unrighteous sentence of the General Assembly; and because they refused to withdraw their protest when the Assembly desired them to do so. On this single ground were they expelled from a church, to whose principles and constitution they were conscientiously attached, and on which they reflected honour, both by their talents and by their piety. That the sentence which the synod of Perth pronounced against Mr. Erskine, when they found him censurable on account of certain expressions used by him in his synod sermon, was unjust, few will now be inclined to question. Neither the synod nor the Assembly who afterwards affirmed the sentence, ventured to hint that the sentiments contained in the obnoxious passages were unscriptural, or opposed to the standards of their church. All that they affirmed concerning them was, that they *impugned* several acts of Assembly, and tended to disturb the peace and good order of the church; and even this was an arbitrary construction which they put upon the passages,—a construction which Mr. Erskine himself disclaimed, and which would not have suggested itself to any individual who was not listening to the discourse under the influence of party-feeling. That there were pointed allusions in the sermon to the practice, which had become so prevalent, of violently intruding ministers upon reclaiming congregations, and to the infringement of the rights of the people by the act of 1732, which had been so unconstitutionally passed, Mr. Erskine did not deny. In bearing testimony against these and similar abuses, he considered that he was doing nothing more than his duty; and no occasion could be more fitting for expressing his sentiments upon these points, than when his brethren were assembled in their synod to deliberate concerning the affairs of the church. Besides, if any apology were necessary for the ministerial freedom which he exercised on this occasion, it ought to be remembered, that the supreme court had refused to receive any representations on

the subject of the prevailing corruptions, and had prohibited the entering of dissents and protests upon their record against their own proceedings, however unscriptural and unconstitutional these might be ; so that faithful ministers were reduced to the alternative, either of appearing to sanction, by their silence, the grossest abuses, or of letting their voice be heard against them in the pulpit.

This, then, constituted the whole amount of Mr. Erskine's alleged offence, that he ventured to hint at certain abuses which had crept into the church ; and, in a particular manner, that he presumed to pronounce unscriptural the mode of electing ministers which the General Assembly had sanctioned. For being thus honest and courageous in the expression of his sentiments was he declared to be deserving of public censure. Mr. Erskine showed his respect for the authority of the supreme court so far, that he received the rebuke and admonition when they were tendered to him ; but immediately after, he laid a protest upon the table in which he declared, that notwithstanding such a sentence having been pronounced, he was at liberty to preach the same truths of God, that he had already preached, and to testify against the same or similar defections of the church, on all proper occasions. In this protest he was joined by his three friends, who considered the sentence pronounced against him as unjust in itself, and as imposing a restraint upon ministerial faithfulness. So averse were these men to leave the church, and so great was their dread of being accounted schismatics, that notwithstanding the treatment which Mr. Erskine had received, and the many corruptions which prevailed, they were quite willing to have remained in her communion, and to have acted under their protest, provided they had been permitted to do so. But the Assembly peremptorily ordered them to withdraw their protest, and to express their sorrow for having offered it, under penalty of being dealt with as obstinate offenders. To this mandate they could not conscientiously submit : and because they would not make a surrender of their consciences, nor consent to have their mouths gagged, were they first suspended from the exercise of their office, and finally driven from their charges altogether. Who would not have felt themselves aggrieved, had they been subjected to such treatment ? Who, possessed of the common feelings of men, would not have entered their solemn protest against such proceedings, as oppressive and unjust ?

It was in such circumstances as these, that the Fathers of the Secession declared that they could no longer hold communion with men, who, for a series of years, had trampled upon the rights of their fellow Christians, by imposing minis-

ters on congregations in the face of the most determined opposition; who had shown themselves the patrons of corruptions and abuse; who had spread the shield of their protection over an individual who had been twice convicted of the grossest heresy,\* and who had stretched ecclesiastical authority to its utmost pitch, that by means of it they might crush those who had the honesty and the courage to oppose their measures. In reference to this party in the Church of Scotland, who at that time bore the ascendancy, their language was, "*We are obliged to make a Secession from them, and we can have no ministerial communion with them, till they see their sins and mistakes, and amend them.*" While they publicly announced a Secession from *the prevailing party* in the church, they declared their adherence to the principles of the Presbyterian Church of Scotland, to the doctrine, government, discipline, and worship recognised in her standards; they professed, at the same time, a warm attachment to those good men who remained within her pale, and who, like themselves, were struggling to vindicate her liberty, and to promote her purity; and they declared that they were willing to hold with all such both ministerial and Christian communion. As it is important for my readers to know the exact ground which the founders of the Secession occupied, when they withdrew from the national church, and the views and feelings with which they took this important step, I shall permit them to state these in their own language. The following extract is from a document published by them, immediately after the Secession commenced, and entitled, "A Testimony to the doctrine, worship, government, and discipline of the Church of Scotland," &c.

"We own (say they) that Secession from ministerial communion with such as bear the character and office of ministers of the gospel, ought to proceed upon weighty and important grounds; yet, as it cannot be refused that a Secession from ministerial communion with such has been found in some cases both *necessary* and *justifiable*, so we hope it will be evident to such as consider the matter without partiality and prejudice, that our *present Secession* is both *warrantable* and *necessary*: Our protestation doth limit and circumscribe the same; and it plainly characteriseth them from whom it is made. Our Secession is not from the Church of Scotland; we own her doctrine contained in her Confession of Faith; we adhere to her covenanted presbyterian church government, discipline, and worship: Neither is our Secession from those who are cleaving unto our covenanted principles, and who are affected

\* Professor Simson.

with the grievances we complain of, and are in their several spheres wrestling against the same; but it is from a party who have got the management in their hands, and who have got the majority on their side in the judicatories, particularly in our Assemblies and Commissions, and who are *carrying on a course of defection* from our reformed and covenanted principles, and who are *suppressing ministerial freedom and faithfulness* in testifying against their present backslidings, by inflicting censures upon ministers for witnessing by protestation and otherwise against the same.”\*

From the preceding statements it must appear obvious to every unprejudiced reader, that the Secession did not originate in a factious spirit, and that the charge of schism can by no means apply to the venerable men with whom it commenced. They were *thrust out* of the church, at a time when they had no intention of leaving it; and being thus thrust out, they were placed, in the providence of God, in such circumstances that, as they themselves express it, they *were obliged to make a Secession* from the men who had treated them with such harshness and injustice, and who were pursuing a system of measures that tended to the overthrow of vital godliness.† Their chief guilt, in the estimation of those who displayed such violence against them, was their *faithfulness*. They considered it their duty to lift their warning voice against existing evils, that they might stem, if possible, the torrent of corruption: and because they would not forego this privilege, and keep silence at the bidding of the hirelings of the State, they were, by an unjust sentence, declared to be no longer ministers of the Church of Scotland. The Assembly, as we shall afterwards see, made an attempt to repair the injury which their Commission had done, by virtue of their authority. But it was too late. The Seceders had taken their ground, and they were resolved to maintain it, until they should have some better security given than any that was

\* Testimony, &c., p. 45.

† Mr. Wilson, in his excellent Defence, says, p. 40, “It was not violent intrusions, it was not the Act 1732, neither was it any other particular step of defection, considered abstractly and by themselves, upon which the Secession was stated; but a complex course of defection, both in doctrine, government, and discipline, carried on with a high hand by the present judicatories of this church, justifying themselves in their procedure, and refusing to be reclaimed.” Again, observes the same writer, (p. 34 of the Continuation of his Defence,) “The case stands thus with the Seceding ministers; they were formerly in ecclesiastical communion with the present judicatories, and they tried all means that lay in their power, and which they thought proper, for stopping the current of defection; they joined in presbyterial instructions to the several Assemblies; they tried petitions, representations, and doctrinal testimonies; they tried dissents and protestations for their exoneratation; they continued testifying after this manner, till the judicatories thrust some of them out from their communion.”

offered to them, that the ruling party would retrace their steps, and pursue, for the future, such measures as should tend to promote the glory of God, and advance the interests of religion.

## CHAPTER II.

The four brethren meet at Gairney Bridge—The Associate Presbytery formed—Reasons assigned for its formation—First Testimony published—Summary of its contents—Articles of belief published by the presbytery—Popularity of the Seceding ministers—Proceedings of the General Assembly in 1734—Act authorizing the restoration of the four brethren to their charges—Remarks on this act of Assembly—Meeting of the synod of Perth and Stirling in July 1734—The sentence pronounced by the Commission against the four brethren reversed—The brethren refuse to return to the national church—Reasons for their refusal—Their conduct vindicated—Meeting of the General Assembly in 1735—The Associate Presbytery agree to proceed to acts of jurisdiction—Applications for sermon made to the presbytery from the parishes of Muckhart and Kinross—Confession of sin made by the brethren of the Presbytery to one another—General Assembly of 1736—Professor Campbell of St. Andrews—Convicted of error—No censure inflicted—Messrs. Wilson and Fisher visit the west of Scotland—Introduction of the Secession into Ireland—Mr. Wilson elected Professor of Divinity by the Associate Presbytery—Publication of the Judicial Testimony—Attacked by Mr. Currie of Kinglassie—Defended by Mr. Wilson—Porteous riot—Captain Porteous hanged by the populace—Seceding ministers accused by the Duke of Argyll of being concerned in this business—Porteous act—Condemned by the Seceding ministers.

AFTER the sentence of the Commission had been pronounced against Mr. Erskine and his three friends, loosing the relation betwixt them and their respective congregations, and declaring them no longer ministers of the national church, these brethren agreed, before they left Edinburgh, to hold a meeting for the purpose of deliberating what course they would pursue in the circumstances in which they were now placed. Agreeably to this appointment, they met at Gairney Bridge, in the neighbourhood of Kinross, on the 5th December, 1733. Two other brethren, Messrs. Ralph Erskine and Thomas Mair, met along with them. This was a most solemn and important meeting; and the memorable consequences which have resulted from it, entitle it to hold a high place in the reverential regard of every friend of the Secession. The good men who assembled on this occasion felt the delicacy of the situation in which they were placed; they were also deeply sensible of the importance of the trust reposed in them as ministers of the gospel. The proceedings of the Assembly and of the Commission, in reference to them, had excited an extraordinary interest in the country; and they were well aware, that the eyes of a considerable portion of the pious were directed toward them, to see how they would act in the present emergency. In these circumstances, they avoided every thing that might

have the appearance of rashness or precipitancy. They considered it due to themselves, and to the cause in which they were embarked, to observe the utmost caution. Before taking a single step, they pondered well the necessity of it, and the probable consequences that would result from it. Accordingly, when they met at Gairney Bridge, they did not hastily come to a determination what course they would adopt. They continued in prayer and in serious deliberation for two days; and having thus frequently implored the divine direction, and having maturely weighed all the circumstances of the case, they finally resolved to form themselves into a presbytery, under the designation of *The Associate Presbytery*. Mr. Ebenezer Erskine was requested to constitute them with prayer, when he was afterwards chosen Moderator. Mr. James Fisher, minister at Kinclaven, was appointed clerk, and took the oath *de fide*li.\*

The reasons which influenced them in taking this decisive step, were the following: They considered that, by forming themselves into a presbytery, they were following up the design of their protestation before the Commission, in which they declared, that, notwithstanding the sentence which had been pronounced, they were at liberty to exercise the key of discipline and government, and all the functions of the ministerial office. By thus uniting together in *collegio*, they were acting more in consistency with their professed principles as presbyterians, than if they should act separately, and independently of one another. They farther conceived, that the state of the Established Church was such as to require prompt and efficient measures to be adopted, to give relief to those who, in every part of the country, were groaning under the yoke of patronage: and with the view of granting both effectual and permanent relief to all who might require it, did they form themselves into a presbytery. They did not consider that they had so clear a promise of the Great Head of the church amongst them, until they were constituted in his name. And, finally, there was some danger if they dismissed, on the present occasion, without coming to any final resolution, that they might become disunited amongst themselves, and might not be favoured with another opportunity, equally convenient with the present, of forming themselves into a presbytery.†

\* The members of the Associate Presbytery, at its first formation, were Mr. Ebenezer Erskine, minister of Stirling; Mr. William Wilson, minister at Perth; Mr. Alexander Moncrieff, minister at Abernethy; and Mr. James Fisher, minister at Kinclaven. Mr. Ralph Erskine of Dunfermline, and Mr. Thomas Mair of Orwell, though present on this interesting occasion, did not connect themselves with the presbytery till some time afterward.

† Minutes of the Associate Presbytery.

Such were the reasons that influenced them in associating together in a presbyterial capacity. They agreed, however, that for some time to come their meetings should be held chiefly for prayer and religious conference; and that before proceeding to any judicial acts, they would wait to see whether a spirit of reformation might not yet pervade the ecclesiastical judicatories, and thus a door be opened for their restoration to the bosom of the national church. Before separating, they appointed Messrs. Wilson and Moncrieff a committee to prepare an extended statement of the reasons of their protestation before the Commission. These brethren executed with great care, and with much ability, the task assigned them; and having presented at a future meeting of presbytery a long and an elaborate statement of the reasons of their secession from the national church, the whole was carefully revised by all the brethren, and was soon after published under the sanction of the Presbytery. It was entitled, "A Testimony to the doctrine, government, and discipline, of the Church of Scotland; or, Reasons by Mr. Ebenezer Erskine, &c. for their protestation before the Commission of the General Assembly, November 1733."

It does not consist with the plan which the writer of this narrative has prescribed to himself in the prosecution of this history, to introduce into its pages the various official publications emitted from time to time by the Secession Church. To do so, would be to load the narrative with a mass of matter, which, however excellent it might be in itself, could not be supposed interesting to the greater part of his readers, and would be apt to deter them from the perusal of this work. To this rule, however, which I have laid down for my guidance, occasional exceptions must occur, otherwise the interests of truth would suffer, and an injury would be inflicted on the memories of the good. The notice which I am now about to take of the first Testimony published by the Fathers of the Secession, forms one of these exceptions. Let none of my readers close this book in disgust at the mentioning of the word *Testimony*. I am aware that the term is, in the estimation of many, sufficiently vulgar and commonplace, and that there is a danger of their being seized with nausea at the very sight of it; but I know also, that a publication having an unpromising title, may yet be distinguished for the excellence of its contents, and that we are to judge of the value of it from the latter of these, and not from the former. Had the Fathers of the Secession, instead of adopting the plain and familiar word *Testimony*, dignified their official productions with some high-sounding title, the probability is, that the men of the present day, enlightened and intelligent though

they be, would not have deemed them unworthy of their notice. The province of the historian, however, is not to invent new names for works that have been long in existence; his business is to give a faithful narrative of the past, as well as of present events, calling every thing by its proper name; and seeing that the venerable men, with whom the Secession originated, after having formed themselves into a presbytery, considered it due to themselves, and to the cause in which they were engaged, to publish a defence of their conduct and of their principles, and gave to their defence, when published, the title of "A Testimony to the doctrine, government, and discipline of the Church of Scotland," &c., it certainly becomes the men of the present generation to give to these intrepid worthies a patient and attentive hearing. The language in which their sentiments are clothed, is occasionally homely and uncouth; but the sentiments themselves are dignified, manly, and scriptural in a high degree; they breathe a spirit of the most ardent devotedness to the cause of God, and to the best interests of the human race. The writer of this work, then, craves no indulgence from his readers, while he presents them with a brief exposition of the statements contained in the first Testimony published by the Associate Presbytery in vindication of their conduct. In giving this exposition, he is influenced chiefly by the following reasons:—1. The conduct of Mr. Erskine, and of those who acted along with him, has been frequently arraigned and condemned, in the strongest terms, by writers who have espoused the opposite side of the question. They have been stigmatized as "popular demagogues," and have been charged with "unreasonable intemperance and pertinacity,"\* in opposing the violent measures of the ruling party in the church; and it is nothing more than an act of common justice to give these men an opportunity of being heard in vindication of themselves, so that the world may judge on what side truth and justice lie. 2. Many have grown up within the Secession, who are, in a great measure, ignorant of the exact grounds which the founders of the Secession occupied, when they withdrew from the national church, and of the principles which they maintained; and it is of importance that these should have stated to them, in the language of the first Seceders themselves, what were the views which they held, and what were the reasons that influenced them in forming themselves into a distinct religious society. 3. I conceive that a history of the Secession Church would be very incomplete, did it not furnish those connected with other denominations, with the means of knowing exactly what were

\* Moncrieff's Life of Dr. Erskine, Appendix, No. I. pp. 444, 446.

the charges preferred by the Seceders against the Established judicatories, and which constituted the original grounds of the Secession; also, what were the sentiments which they held, in reference to Christian doctrine and church polity. That Christians of other denominations may be furnished with the means of obtaining this information, I have attempted to give a condensed view of the facts and reasonings contained in the document above-mentioned.

In the introduction, the presbytery give a narrative of the ecclesiastical proceedings carried on against Mr. Erskine, and the other brethren, and which terminated in the Commission dissolving the relation betwixt them and their respective congregations. They then take a review of what God had done for the Church of Scotland, during the past periods of her history, and detail the steps by which she had gradually declined in purity. They avow their attachment to the constitution and standards of the church, and declare that they did not secede from the church itself, but from a ruling party within the church, who had got the management of affairs into their hands, and who were pursuing a course of defection, disregarding the laws of Christ, and trampling upon the privileges of the people. Against this party, they state five distinct charges, as the reasons of their Secession from them; and each of the charges they substantiate, by adducing a variety of facts, which were both too recent and too notorious to be denied.

The first charge which they advance is, that the prevailing party were pursuing measures subversive of the presbyterian constitution of the church. In support of this charge, they refer to repeated instances in which the Assembly had violated their own constitution, and enacted laws, either without previously sending them down, agreeably to the barrier act, to presbyteries, to be considered by them, or in opposition to the declared wishes of the presbyteries. The act of 1730, for instance, which prohibited the recording of reasons of dissent against the decisions of church courts, and which was a grievous infringement of the rights of both ministers and elders, was passed by the Assembly, without being transmitted to the presbyteries at all; and the obnoxious act of 1732, concerning the *settlement of vacant congregations*, was passed by the mere authority of the Assembly, even though the majority of the presbyteries had declared against it. In reference to these and similar proceedings, they complain that "the prevailing party have usurped a legislative power and authority over the house of God, in making laws and constitutions, that not only have no manner of warrant from the Word, but are contrary unto it; and they exercise a lordly and magisterial

power over the flock and heritage of God, in binding their decrees upon the consciences of the members of the church, by threatening and actually inflicting the highest censures of the church upon them, if they do not submit to their arbitrary impositions; and this we judge to be a thrust at our constitution, and that in a most sensible manner." They further refer, in support of the same charge, to the unconstitutional power assumed by the Commission, in determining the causes referred to them. This delegated court engrossed almost the whole authority of the church, and matters of the highest importance were settled by them in a manner the most arbitrary and absolute. By pleading that their decisions, however unjust they might be, were irreversible, they made their own will and pleasure the rule of their conduct. The wishes of the people, and the remonstrances of presbyteries, were alike disregarded by them. Contrary to the common maxim, *delegatus non potest delegari*, they assumed to themselves the power of erecting sub-commissions, and invested them with powers which were not intrusted to themselves, and which it was not in the power even of the Assembly to give, viz. to invade the rights of presbyteries, which are radical judicatories. These sub-committees, appointed by the Commission, travelled over the country, received the trials of young men, and ordained them, in opposition to the declared mind both of the presbyteries in which, and of the parishes over which, they were settled; and this they did, without waiting the judgment of the ensuing Assembly, though protestations for leave to complain to the Assembly had been entered in due time and form.\*

\* Instead of appointing the presbyteries themselves, as the constitution required, to execute the sentences of the supreme court, the Assembly or Commission appointed individual ministers of their own number, or members of synods, or presbyteries in the vicinity of the parishes, to execute their sentences, by giving collation to the presentees, in the same forms which, in ordinary cases, would have been competent to the presbyteries themselves, leaving it to such members of the presbyteries as were willing to join with them, to take part in the transaction.

"This expedient was adopted in 1729, in the settlement of New Machar; and continued to be resorted to in cases of similar difficulty, for twenty years after that time. It was certainly a great deviation from constitutional law. But the times were difficult. The scruples of many of the most popular clergy were as sincere as they were obstinate. The agitation of the people on the subject was every day becoming more visible and violent. The opposition to many of the presentees, who were inducted by the committees appointed by the supreme court, was as inveterate after their induction as before, and their churches were in danger of being almost entirely deserted. The leaders in the Assemblies were not willing to add to the struggle occasioned by the opposition of the people, a controversy with the scruples of the clergy; and this was the origin of what was then denominated among the populace, 'The Riding Committees.'"—Moncrieff's Life of Dr. Erskine, Appendix, p. 442.

The attempt which the reverend baronet here makes to apologize for what

"The above conduct of the Commission," say they, "appears to us to strike at the very root of our presbyterian constitution, and to be a piece of tyranny equal to any thing exercised by the diocesan prelates, when they were in power and authority in the land. It is a presbyterian principle, founded upon the word of God, that the authoritative missions of men unto the work and office of the holy ministry, by the trial of their gifts and qualifications, and the setting of them apart to that sacred office, by prayer and imposition of hands, belongs unto a constitute presbytery. It is also a received principle amongst us, that the power of superior courts over a presbytery, is not a *primitive*, but a *cumulative* power and authority; that is, neither synods, nor assemblies, nor their commissions, can deprive presbyteries of these inherent rights and privileges that belong unto them, or of that power and authority that they have received from the Lord Jesus, the only Head and King of the church, but that they ought to protect and support them in the exercise of the same. But the present management of the commissions of our several General Assemblies in appointing committees with a power of trial and ordination, is a taking of that power out of the hands of presbyteries, which properly belongs unto them; and, at the same time, an erecting of a court, with a power of mission, unto the work and office of the ministry, that has no manner of foundation in the word of God."

The *second* charge which the Seceding brethren advance against the ruling party in the church is, "that they are pursuing such measures as do actually corrupt, or have the most direct tendency to corrupt, the doctrine contained in our excellent Confession of Faith." In support of this charge, they refer to the lenity that had been shown by the Assembly to Professor Simson, after he had been convicted, on the clearest evidence, of teaching the most dangerous errors; also to the manner in which certain publications of Professor Campbell of St. Andrews had been received, containing in them sentiments that were opposed both to the word of God, and the standards of the church. "Instead of commencing any process," say they, "against the author, he is caressed and countenanced in our assemblies, as being a fit man for the purpose of our ruling side, who are carrying on the present course of defection!" They appeal, further, to the refusal of the ecclesiastical rulers to listen to the representations of synods and presbyteries, urging them to publish an act confirmatory of

he calls "a great deviation from constitutional law," is certainly a very sorry one. What a miserable contrast do his statements present to the firm and dignified language which the Seceders employ, when reprobating this same "deviation!"

the truths that had been attacked, and warning the people against the dangerous errors that had been propagated. After showing that a new and fashionable mode of preaching had found its way into the church, which consisted in a "sapless and lifeless descanting upon the moral virtues," and in which the peculiar doctrines of the gospel were seldom if ever alluded to, they proceed thus:—"Seeing the Church of Scotland is in such circumstances at present, through the influence and management of the prevailing party, there is too much ground to fear, that in a little time (if God do not prevent) this Established Church shall only be orthodox, in the same sense that the Church of England is so, by subscribing the articles which are truly Calvinist in the doctrinal parts, while yet Arminian doctrine is everywhere taught by her clergy.\* Upon which account, we judge this generation, and our poor posterity, in the utmost danger of losing the gospel in its power and purity, through the prevalency of a corrupt and unsound ministry."

The *third* charge which they prefer against the prevailing party is, "That sinful and unwarrantable terms of ministerial communion are imposed, by restraining ministerial freedom and faithfulness in testifying against the present course of defection and backsliding." In support of this charge, they appeal to the decision in the case of Mr. Erskine, who was found censurable for presuming, in his public ministrations, to find fault with certain ecclesiastical proceedings, which he considered unconstitutional and unwarrantable. Such a decision they consider as equivalent to a declaration, on the part of the Assembly, that henceforth no minister, unless he resolves to become obnoxious to censure, shall testify from the pulpit against any act of Assembly, or against any proceedings of the church courts, however sinful they may be. They regard this restraining of ministerial freedom as unreasonable in its own nature, and inconsistent with the faithful discharge of the duties of the ministry; for they say, "there is nothing more plain, than that every minister is bound to declare the whole counsel of God. As he is to teach the observance of all things contained in the word, so he is to show Israel his transgression, and the house of Jacob their sin; and if the sin be committed by the officers of the church, it is so much the more dangerous to the whole body, and therefore ought to be testified against, because that, when the *leaders of the people do cause them to err, they that are led of them are destroyed.*"

\* At the period here referred to, Arminianism was almost universally prevalent throughout the Church of England; but it must gratify every friend of religion to know, that the number of evangelical and faithful ministers in that church has, of late years, been greatly on the increase.

The *fourth* charge is, "That these corrupt courses are carried on with a high hand, notwithstanding that the ordinary means have been used to reclaim them, and to stop the current of the present defection." Under this head, they complain that the Assembly has obstinately refused to listen to the petitions, representations, complaints, and remonstrances sent to them from presbyteries and synods. These were oft-times not permitted to be read in the Assembly, but were generally handed over to a committee, where they were for the most part consigned to oblivion. When the Commissioners from presbyteries urged upon the supreme court the necessity of attending to the complaints of their constituents, the answer returned was, *the Assembly's time is over, or, the Assembly has no time to enter upon the consideration of these things.* "The last Assembly," say the Seceding brethren, "found time to intrude ministers into the parishes of Stow and Kingoldrum, and to pass severe and unjust sentences against some ministers in the presbytery of Dunfermline and the four protesting brethren, but *had no time* to consider the weighty grievances that the flock of Christ are groaning under; we must say it with regret, they *found time to oppress them* more and more, but *not to help or relieve them.*"

The *fifth* article of their charge is, "that they are excluded from keeping up a proper testimony against the defections and backslidings of the prevailing party, in a way of ministerial communion with them." "If we express our sentiments in the forms of petitions and representations, these were disregarded. If we lift up our voice in the pulpit against proceedings which we consider to be sinful, we are summoned to the bar of the church courts and rebuked. If we protest against such censure, as interfering with the free and faithful exercise of our ministry, we are suspended from the sacred office; and if we cannot yield obedience to a sentence of suspension pronounced in such an arbitrary manner, we are cast out of the communion of the church, and declared to be no longer ministers of the Established Church." From this deduction of particulars they draw the following conclusion:—"From all which it is plain, that the prevailing party will not allow us to maintain a proper testimony, in a way of ministerial communion with them, against their present steps of defection and backsliding; and therefore it is not only warrantable for us, but we are laid under a necessity, to lift up a testimony in a way of *secession* from them, against the present current of defection, whereby our constitution is subverted, our doctrine is corrupted, and the heritage and flock of Christ are wounded, scattered, and broken, that *we may not partake with them in their sins*, and may do what in us lies to transmit

unto succeeding generations these valuable truths that have been handed down to us by the contendings and wrestlings of a great cloud of witnesses in Scotland since the dawning of Reformation-light amongst us."

Such were the charges which the Seceding brethren preferred against the ruling party in the church; and on these grounds did they withdraw from all connexion with men who were pursuing measures so unscriptural, unconstitutional, and oppressive. Never were charges contained in any edictment substantiated by evidence so full, so clear, and convincing. Never were reasons more valid stated by any individuals for withdrawing from the communion of a church, and forming themselves into a distinct religious society. Every unprejudiced person who peruses the brief statement that is here given of them, must be convinced that the Seceders acted the part of honest, conscientious men, and that there was no other course, consistent with a good conscience, left them to pursue, than that which they actually adopted.

Afraid lest their enemies might attempt to bring odium upon them by holding them up to the world as men of unsound principles, they subjoined to their reasons of secession a statement of their belief. And that posterity may know what were the principles held by these excellent men, the following outline is given of the declaration which they published:—

1. They own the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament to be the word of God, and the only rule of faith and manners.

2. They declare their sincere and hearty adherence to the form of worship received and practised in the Church of Scotland.

3. They believe with their hearts, and confess with their mouths, that the Lord Jesus Christ, as he is the alone Head and King of his church, so he hath appointed a particular form of government, therein to continue to the end of the world unalterable; and they receive and embrace presbyterian church government, by kirk-sessions, presbyteries, synods, and assemblies, as that form of government which they judge to be agreeable to, and founded upon, the Word of God.

4. They believe that the visible church, which is also catholic and universal under the gospel, consists of all those throughout the world that profess the true religion, and of their children, and is the kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ, and house and family of God, unto which Christ hath given the ministry, oracles, and ordinances of God, for the gathering and perfecting the saints in this life to the end of the world.

5. They acknowledge the perpetual obligation of the National Covenant, frequently sworn by all ranks of persons in

Scotland; also of the Solemn League and Covenant sworn by all ranks both in England and Scotland in the year 1643.

6. They believe, that Christ hath appointed church-officers under him, distinct from the civil magistrate; and that to these are committed the keys of doctrine, discipline, and government.

7. They believe that the decrees and determinations of all councils, made up of fallible men, are no further to be received or submitted to by the church, than in so far as they are consonant unto the word of God.

8. They believe, that, when the plurality of officers in any particular church under the New Testament, do make defection from the purity of doctrine, worship, or government, it is lawful for the lesser part of church-officers, who are holding the head, and keeping the foundation of government, to manage the keys of the kingdom of heaven, in an agreeableness to the laws of Christ.

9. They believe, that it appertains unto every several congregation to elect their own ministers and officers; and that altogether it is to be avoided, that any man be violently intruded or thrust upon any congregation; and that this liberty should with all care be reserved to every several congregation, to have the ministers settled among them with their own call and consent.

10. They believe, that it is the duty of faithful ministers, when defections prevail in a church, and when iniquity is established by law, to give faithful warning against the prevailing evils of the time; and when censured for it, though at the bar of an Assembly, it is their duty to protest for the cause of truth, that it may not fall in the streets; and, when suspended or otherwise censured, that it is their duty to continue in the exercise of their ministry, necessity being laid upon them by their dedication to that office, and the command of God to preach the gospel, and so to obey God rather than man; especially when it is considered that submission to arbitrary authority, in a case wherein the public cause is concerned, is a plain giving up with their testimony.

Though the Commission had passed a sentence, dissolving the relation betwixt the four brethren and their respective congregations, and declaring them to be no longer ministers of the Established Church, yet such was the agitated state of popular feeling, that the sentence could not be carried into effect. The treatment which the brethren had received, was considered by not a few to be harsh and oppressive in a high degree. They enjoyed the sympathy and the prayers of a large portion of the people; and many of the ministers regarded their struggles with feelings of the deepest interest.

In an especial manner, their congregations clung around them with affectionate fondness, and declared their resolution, to abide by them "through good report and through bad report." Mr. William Ferguson of Killin, who had been appointed to intimate the sentence against Mr. Wilson, from the pulpit of the Old Church of Perth, complained in a letter to the Commission, that he had been met at a distance from the town by a tumultuous multitude, who forcibly prevented his entrance.\* Professor Campbell of St. Andrews, having applied to the Sheriff-substitute of Perth to support him, in intimating the sentence against Mr. Moncrieff from the pulpit of the church of Abernethy, and the Sheriff having refused to do so,† protested against his conduct. This protest was transmitted, through the Commission, to the next General Assembly; and by them was referred to the committee of overtures, where, amongst other papers of greater importance, it was consigned to oblivion. At the sacramental occasion at Abernethy, in April 1734, there was assembled, from all parts of the country, such a concourse of people as had never before been witnessed on any similar occasion. The Seceding brethren were looked upon as martyrs in the cause of truth, they were regarded as the unflinching advocates of popular rights; and on these, as well as other accounts, their ministrations were sought after with the greatest eagerness. Mr. Currie of Kinglassie, who afterwards became one of the bitterest enemies of the Secession, and made some violent attacks upon it from the press, at first approved so highly of the conduct of these faithful ministers, that when preaching in the Tolbooth Church of Edinburgh on a fast day before the celebration of the Lord's Supper, he expressed himself concerning them in the following terms: "Though they should suffer suspension, deposition, imprisonment, banishment, heading or hanging, I am convinced in my conscience they suffer for a good cause, and the Lord will own and honour them for it."‡

On the second day of May, 1734, the General Assembly

\* Struthers' History of Scotland, vol. ii. p. 3.

† In the act of toleration passed in the reign of Queen Anne, there is a clause inserted, which prohibits all magistrates from carrying into effect the sentences of ecclesiastical courts. And the Sheriff of Perth, when he refused to interfere in the case of Mr. Moncrieff, acted in strict accordance with the letter of the law, as well as with the spirit of it. The following is the clause referred to:—"And be it farther declared and enacted by the authority aforesaid, that no civil pain or forfeiture, or disability whatsoever, shall be in any ways incurred by any person or persons, by reason of any excommunication, or prosecution in order to excommunication by the church judicatories, in that part of Great Britain called Scotland; and all civil magistrates are hereby expressly prohibited and discharged to force or compel any person or persons to appear when summoned, or to give obedience to any such sentence when pronounced, any law or custom to the contrary notwithstanding."

‡ Wilson's Defence, p. 110.

met, and the attention of the country was fixed upon its proceedings. Considerable exertions had been made to send up to this meeting men of a right spirit, and hopes were entertained that a conciliatory course would be adopted toward the ejected brethren. When the Assembly met, it was found that their friends mustered strong; and even the leaders of the opposite party seem to have been ashamed of the violence of their own proceedings. The great ferment that prevailed among the people, and a fear lest the spirit of disaffection should spread wider and wider, made them act with greater caution. The proceedings of the Assembly were of a more popular kind, and discovered more of a spirit of reformation than any that had characterized the meetings of Assembly for some time past. The act of 1730, discharging the entering, upon the record, of dissents against the decisions of church courts, and the act of 1732, concerning the planting of vacant parishes, were repealed. A complaint of the parish of Auchtermuchty, and of the presbytery of Cupar, against a violent settlement, which the Commission had appointed to take place in that parish, was sustained. It was found, in this instance, that the Commission had exceeded their powers, and the settlement was annulled. When the Commission book, also, was examined, and the proceedings approved of, it was done "with a reservation as to their conduct and sentence passed against Ebenezer Erskine, William Wilson, Alexander Moncrieff, and James Fisher, excepting also from the approbation of their book, the settlement of the parish of Troquire, and the judgment given by them relative to the planting of the parish of Portmoak, which are reserved till the complaints concerning these be heard, reserving also the consideration of the remarks made on their method of proceeding to, or executing, other settlements." This Assembly appointed their Commission to petition his majesty and parliament for the repeal of the patronage act.\* With the view also of satisfying the minds of those, who considered that ministerial freedom was restrained by the late proceedings of the judicatories toward Mr. Erskine and his brethren, an act was sanctioned by the Assembly, in which it is declared, "for the satisfaction of all,"—"That due and regular ministerial freedom is

\* The Commission, during the course of the summer, sent a deputation to London, consisting of the Rev. Messrs. Gordon of Alford, Willison of Dundee, and M'Intosh of Errol, with the view of obtaining the removal of this grievance. It is needless to add that their exertions were unsuccessful. The Assembly, that met the following year, sent another embassy to the metropolis, on the same errand. The deputation consisted of the Rev. Messrs. Anderson of St. Andrews, and Gordon of Alford, together with Colonel John Erskine of Carnock. After making every effort to obtain their object, they were not more successful than their predecessors.

still left to all ministers; and that the same was not, nor shall be held nor understood to be anywise impaired or restrained by the late Assembly's decision in that particular process."

But by far the most important act of this Assembly was the following, which they passed concerning their Seceding brethren:—"The General Assembly, considering the great hurt and prejudice that hath at all times arisen, and must yet arise, to the church, from divisions and animosities creeping in and taking root among the members thereof, notwithstanding their unanimity in sentiments upon material and fundamental points, which more nearly concern the promoting the interests of our blessed Lord and Saviour, the establishing the peace of the church, and the advancement of practical godliness and true religion within the bounds of it, and particularly the lamentable consequences that have followed, and may yet follow upon the separation of Messrs. Ebenezer Erskine, William Wilson, Alexander Moncrieff, and James Fisher, from this church and judicatories thereof, and judging it their duty to endeavour, by all just and proper means consistent with the honour and glory of God, and the maintaining the peace and authority of the church, to restore harmony and brotherly love among all the members of it: Therefore, the General Assembly, without further inquiring into the occasions or steps of proceeding, either on the part of the said brethren, or by the several judicatories under whose consideration their case hath been, which may have produced that unhappy separation, but resolving that all questions on these heads shall for hereafter be comfortably removed, have empowered, and hereby do empower, the Synod of Perth and Stirling, before whom the exceptions to some part of the conduct of two of these four reverend brethren were first taken and tried, upon such application made to them, as they shall judge proper, to take the case of the said four brethren, as it now stands, under their consideration, with full power to the said synod to proceed and do therein, as they shall find most justifiable and expedient for restoring the peace and preserving the authority of this church, and restoring them to their respective charges. But with this express direction, that the synod shall not take upon them to judge of the legality or formality of the former proceedings of the church judicatories, in relation to this affair, either to approve of, or censure the same; but shall only, in virtue of the power and authority now delegated to them by the Assembly, proceed to take such steps for attaining the above ends for the future, as they shall find just, and tending to edification. And the Assembly do hereby appoint the foresaid synod to meet at Stirling upon the first Tuesday of July next, and from time to time to name and appoint the

place and diets of their after meetings, on the said affair, as they shall see cause, until the matter shall be ripened for a final conclusion; and recommend to them to use their utmost endeavours to bring the matter, as soon as reasonably can be, to a final and happy issue.”\*

It is not difficult to perceive what were the motives which dictated such an act as this. Many of the members of the present Assembly, both ministers and elders, were convinced that the Commission, in loosing the protesting brethren from their congregations, and declaring them no longer ministers of the Established Church, had acted precipitately and unjustly; and they were truly desirous to see them restored to their charges. These of course gladly acquiesced in any measure that afforded the prospect of such a desirable event. Another portion of the Assembly were not so favourably disposed toward the ejected ministers; but they were afraid of what would be the consequences, should they persist in carrying into effect the sentence which had already been pronounced against them. They perceived that the current of popular opinion ran strongly in their favour. The number of petitions, sent up from presbyteries and synods, showed that the church was agitated from the one end to the other; and unless some healing measures should be adopted, the probability was, that the breach already occasioned would become wider and wider. Hence proceeded the act above quoted, in which the Assembly declare that all former proceedings and decisions shall stand as they are, while at the same time they authorize the synod of Perth and Stirling to take measures for restoring the Seceding ministers to their charges! If the Assembly, or Commission, of the preceding year had done wrong in ejecting these ministers from the church, why not *declare* so, and disannul their proceedings? This was nothing more than an act of justice to these men, who had been so harshly treated, and whom they were now anxious to restore. If the Assembly, or Commission, had done right in ejecting them, then certainly the grounds of their ejection remained as valid as ever; and if so, how shall the present Assembly be vindicated, in agreeing to receive back into their fellowship men who had previously been pronounced unworthy of their communion, without either requiring or obtaining from them any evidence of their penitence? Whoever were the framers of this act, the whole tenor of it shows that it was dictated, not by a sense of justice, but by fear. On the one hand, pride forbade the acknowledgment of any thing like error or rashness in the past proceedings. So sensitive

\* Acts of Assembly, 1734.

were the Assembly on this point, that they prohibited the synod, when the matter should come before them, from uttering a single whisper with regard to the past. On the other hand, the dread of giving further offence to those who had shown themselves friendly to the Seceders, and of driving them also from the communion of the church, made them agree to an act of amnesty in favour of those who had been ejected. Should they not thus succeed in bringing back those who had already renounced their authority, they thought that, by this appearance of clemency, they would at least secure those who might be wavering in their allegiance.

The synod of Perth and Stirling met on the second day of July, agreeably to the appointment of the Assembly; and having taken the case of the four brethren under their consideration, they unanimously agreed, after a long and serious deliberation, to the following decision:—"This synod, by virtue of the foresaid delegated power and authority, and in name of our Lord Jesus Christ, did and hereby do with one voice and consent, take off the sentences pronounced by the Commission of the General Assembly, 1733, against the foresaid four brethren, Messrs. Ebenezer Erskine, William Wilson, Alexander Moncrieff, and James Fisher, declaring the same of no force or effect for the future, unite and restore them to ministerial communion with this church, to their several charges, and to the exercise of all parts of the ministerial function therein, as fully and freely as there never had been act, sentence, obstacle, or impediment whatsoever in the way thereof in time past, all which are hereby declared *sopite*, and set aside for the future. And the synod do recommend to these four reverend brethren, to carry towards the Lord's servants, their brethren, ministers of this church, and their respective flocks and charges, as ministers of Christ and his gospel ought to do, in all time coming. And they do, in the like manner, recommend it to the respective presbyteries of Perth, Stirling, and Dunkeld, to receive them as members of their respective presbyteries, and behave to them as ministers of Christ in this church: and do enjoin not only the ministers of the said presbyteries, but also of all other presbyteries within their bounds, and the said four brethren, so to demean themselves towards each other, as may answer the obligations they came under by their ordination vows in the Lord. And the synod take this opportunity to warn all the people in this province, to beware of every thing that may have a tendency to obstruct the good ends of this act, and what the General Assembly had so much at heart, viz. the peace and union of this church, by doing what may encourage division, or weaken the hands of

the Lord's servants set over them. And further, the synod appoint the names of the said four brethren to be immediately enrolled in the records of this synod, and that Mr. Hamilton read this act from the pulpit of Stirling, Mr. Black from the pulpit of Perth, Mr. Meek from the pulpit of Abernethy, and Mr. Gow from the pulpit of Kinclaven, on some Lord's day betwixt and the first of August. And the synod recommend it to Mr. Hamilton to acquaint Mr. Erskine, Mr. McIntosh to acquaint Mr. Wilson, Mr. Palmer to acquaint Mr. Moncrieff, and Mr. Gow to acquaint Mr. Fisher, of this act and sentence with their first conveniency. And finally, they appoint this act to be insert in all the presbytery books within this province, and they leave it to every minister to intimate the same to their congregations, as they see cause."

It was expected by the friends of the Seceders, that now, when the sentence of the Commission was removed, the brethren would immediately return to the bosom of the church, and that all past differences would be buried in oblivion. So confidently was this expectation entertained by them, that the presbytery of Stirling, soon after the meeting of synod, elected Mr. Erskine moderator, and appointed a deputation of their number to wait upon him, and request him to take the chair. The intended honour Mr. Erskine modestly, but firmly, declined. The presbytery, however, kept the chair vacant for some time, in the expectation that he would comply. With the view of putting an end to this state of suspense, Mr. Erskine wrote them a letter, in which he gave a candid statement of his reasons for not returning to the communion of the national church. The following extract will show what were the sentiments he entertained concerning the late proceedings of the supreme court. While he was not insensible to the exertions which had been made by the friends of truth, to promote the cause of reformation, yet he was convinced that the majority were actuated by the same spirit as formerly. "I know," says he, "it is strenuously pleaded, that what is done by the last Assembly, lays a sufficient ground for our accession, notwithstanding of all that is past. I cannot help differing with those that are of this opinion. I humbly conceive there is a great difference between a positive reformation, and a stop or sist given to a deformation. I am far from derogating from the stand made by the worthy members of the last Assembly against the career of the corrupt party. But allow me to say, that any thing done appears rather a check or restraint upon those men for a time, than any real cleanly reformation. The party are as numerous in judicatories, and actuated by the same spirit of defection as ever; and, for the most part, carry the affairs of Christ's kingdom, in inferior

courts, in the same channel, since the Assembly 1734, as before.

"Some brethren call us to come in and help them against the current of defection : but now that the hand of Providence has taken us out of the current against which we were swimming, and set us upon the reformation ground, by a solemn testimony and constitution, it would be vain for us to endanger ourselves by running into the current again, unless our reverend brethren, who call for our help, can persuade us that our so doing will turn the current, and save both them and ourselves, and so preserve the Lord's work and testimony. In my opinion, it would be by far much wiser for these reverend brethren to come out of the dangerous current to us, than for us to come back to them, Jer. xv. 19—21. No doubt worldly motives give a strong bias against this notion ; but if it is our duty, we are bound to forsake all, and follow the Lord."\*

The only one of the Seceding brethren on whose mind the proceedings of the Assembly appear to have produced a favourable impression, was Mr. Wilson of Perth. He was for some time considerably perplexed as to what was the path of duty—whether he ought to return, or continue still in a state of secession. Immediately after the Assembly, he wrote a letter to Mr. Erskine, expressing a hope of a reunion with the church;† and this hope he did not altogether renounce, until the proceedings of two or three subsequent Assemblies showed how vain it was to cherish it. "I own," says he, "that, after the meeting of Assembly 1734, I was in much perplexity about our continuing in a state of secession. It occasioned many thoughts of heart unto me, to understand what was duty in the present case. But as I had no hesitation about my duty, when I did, together with my other three brethren, declare a secession from the judicatories of this church, in our protestation before the Commission, November, 1733 ; so when I have observed the conduct of the said judicatories, since the year 1734, I have been gradually cleared, and more and more confirmed, that it is our duty to continue in a state of secession."‡ These are not the sentiments of a restless agitator, or of a factious demagogue, anxious to foment troubles, or to perpetuate strife ; they are the sentiments of a person acting under the influence of an enlightened judgment, and of a tender conscience, and who is truly desirous to know what is the path of duty, that he may pursue it. *Such* were the men with whom the Secession originated. Mr. Wilson, afterward

\* This letter is inserted at full length in the Christian Repository, vol. iv. p. 461.

† Ferrier's Memoirs of Mr. Wilson, p. 278.

‡ Wilson's Defence (Continuation), p. 30.

referring to this critical period of his ministerial course, and to the perplexity of mind which he experienced, says, "I desire to bless the Lord, who cleared my way, and led me, by his good hand upon me, to join my brethren, though the unworthiest among them, in the testimony that is now lifted up for the truths of our Lord Jesus, in opposition to the manifold injuries that are done, both to his truths and members, by the present judicatories of this Established Church."\*

The Presbytery, after having weighed impartially all the circumstances of the case, were unanimously of opinion that, notwithstanding what both the Assembly and the synod had done to clear the way for their return, the grounds of their secession, with one or two exceptions, remained as valid as ever. They, therefore, resolved still to continue in a state of separation, until they should see symptoms of a more extensive reformation taking place within the national church. Having prepared a statement of the reasons which influenced them in coming to this determination, they published them in a pamphlet, immediately before the meeting of Assembly 1735.† In this statement, they pay a just tribute to the exertions of the many excellent men who were members of the preceding Assembly; and they admit that if more was not accomplished by this Assembly, it was not owing to any lukewarmness on the part of these faithful ministers, but to the preponderating influence of a still stronger party, who were animated by a different spirit. They give the Assembly of 1734 credit for not giving any direct countenance to violent settlements, and also for imposing a check upon the arbitrary proceedings of the Commission. They further admit that, by the rescinding of the acts 1730 and 1732, above referred to, one original ground of complaint was removed. But, except in these particular points, the grounds of their secession, which they had stated at full length in their Testimony, remained exactly as they were. No warning had been emitted against the gross doctrinal errors that prevailed, and no adequate censure inflicted on those who were guilty of teaching these errors. Congregations who had had ministers violently intruded on them, were required to submit to their ministrations, on pain of being deprived of sealing ordinances altogether, as no other minister was permitted to administer them, without being subjected to the highest censure of the church. The act, also, respecting Mr. Erskine, censuring him for the freedom which he had used in his sermon, still stood unrepealed. Against this act the brethren

\* Wilson's Defence (Continuation), p. 30.

† This pamphlet was entitled, "Reasons by Mr. Ebenezer Erskine, &c. why they have not acceded to the Judicatories of the Established Church."

had protested, as imposing a restraint upon ministerial freedom; and, as the synod had been prohibited from judging either of the legality or formality of this act, or of any of the proceedings that had taken place, it is obvious that the case stood exactly as it was when the ministers first protested. If ministerial freedom was restrained by the act when it was first passed, it was restrained by it still.

It is true the Assembly had declared that due and regular ministerial freedom "*was not*, nor shall be held or understood to be anywise impaired or restrained by the decision against Mr. Erskine, and his brethren." The Presbytery show that this declaration of the Assembly, concerning ministerial freedom, is altogether unsatisfactory; that it is little else than a play upon words. The remarks which they make upon it display great acuteness and ingenuity. The substance of them is as follows:—What the Assembly mean by *due and regular ministerial freedom*, they have not told us; but two facts are sufficiently obvious. First, that Mr. Erskine was rebuked at the bar of the Assembly, for having testified in public against certain acts and proceedings of the church courts which he considered to be sinful; and, secondly, that the four brethren were first suspended from their office, and afterwards declared to be no longer ministers of the national church, merely because they offered to protest against a sentence which they conceived to be unjust. When these two facts are viewed in connexion with the above declaration, the inference is fair, either that the Assembly do not consider it to be *due and regular* ministerial freedom for a minister to testify publicly against any ecclesiastical proceedings, however sinful and unwarrantable they may be, or for those who have been aggrieved by an unjust sentence, to enter their protest against it. Or, if the Assembly do consider that such conduct is consistent with *due and regular* ministerial freedom, then it is obvious that such freedom *was restrained* by the treatment which the brethren received; inasmuch as this was exactly the freedom for which Mr. Erskine and his friends were visited with the heaviest censures of the church, both as a punishment to themselves, and as a warning to all others who should be guilty of similar conduct.

It was certainly making too large a demand upon the credulity of the Seceders, first to censure, next suspend, and, finally, eject them from their charges, for exercising privileges which had been claimed and exercised by ministers of the Church of Scotland ever since it had existed as a church, and then, after having done all this, gravely to tell these very men, that ministerial freedom "*was not impaired or*

*restrained*" by such usage. Such a declaration could not impose upon the most simple, much less upon those acute and ingenuous-minded men for whom it was chiefly intended. The Presbytery give a just interpretation of this act, when they declare its meaning to be shortly this:—"That ministers of this church are allowed ministerial freedom, providing they do not from the pulpit testify against the unwarrantableness of any act of Assembly, or proceedings of church judicatories, and providing they do not protest against an Assembly, even though they should proceed to inflict censures on their brethren for such a testimony."

The Presbytery, having stated fully and candidly the reasons why they could not in present circumstances accede to the judicatories of the national church, notwithstanding that the sentence of the Commission had been removed, conclude by making the following proposals, which, if carried into effect by the Assembly, would remove their difficulties, and pave the way for their return.

1. "That a seasonable warning be emitted against the infidelity and gross prevailing errors of the day.

2. "That the sentence of Assembly, censuring Mr. Erskine for the freedom which he used in his synod sermon, also that which appointed the highest censures of the church to be inflicted on the four brethren for protesting against said decision, be rescinded, and all that followed thereupon be declared null and void: Farther, that all the ministers of the church be enjoined to give faithful warning against the prevailing corruptions of the times.

3. "That the decision of the same Assembly, 1733, concerning some brethren in the presbytery of Dunfermline, be also rescinded; and that it be declared lawful for any minister of the church to dispense sealing ordinances to those who have had ministers intruded on them, contrary to the word of God, and the rules of the church founded thereupon.

4. "That should the patronage act not be repealed, the acceptance of presentations be declared contrary to the principles of this church; that all preachers accepting of them be deprived of their license; and that all ministers guilty of a similar transgression be suspended, or, should they pertinaciously adhere, be deposed. Farther, that it be enacted, That in all time coming no minister shall be settled in any congregation without the call and consent of the majority of that congregation who are in full communion.

5. "That presbyteries, in licensing and ordaining men to the office of the ministry, be strictly enjoined to inquire not only into their literature, but also into their acquaintance with the power of godliness, and the work of the Spirit

upon their souls : and that they admit none to trials in order to preaching, except such as are known to be of sound principles, of a good report, of a sober, grave, prudent, and pious behaviour, and who have the other qualifications required in scripture.

6. "That there be an acknowledgment of the great guilt of this land, in pursuing a course of backsliding contrary to the word of God, and the obligations under which its inhabitants lie to promote reformation."

If such things as these were done, "we might," say the Presbytery, "have the comfortable prospect of a pleasant and desirable unity and harmony with our brethren, in concurring with them, according to our weak measure, in all other necessary steps towards a further reformation."\*

The resolution of the Seceders not to return to the national church, occasioned no small disappointment and regret to many of their friends in the ministry. They were considered by them as obstinate and pertinacious, and instead of supporting them as formerly, they gradually cooled in their attachment to them. In some instances, their attachment was converted into a spirit of the keenest opposition. There are two classes of persons by whom the part which the brethren acted on the present occasion will be condemned. There is one class whose vision is of such a kind, that it can discern little or no excellence out of the pale of an Establishment ; no matter what may be the abuses that have crept in during the lapse of generations, still it is *the Establishment*, and this is to them a sufficient reason for tolerating existing corruptions and errors, even where they are as glaring as the light of the sun. For any to forsake the communion of their favourite Establishment, *merely* because corruptions and errors prevail within her, is what they by no means approve of ; and such a sectarian spirit they think it the duty of every good subject to discountenance. To persons of this description, the conduct of the Fathers of the Secession will appear to be highly criminal, who preferred maintaining a separate communion to returning within the pale of the Establishment, after they had the honour of being formally invited back.

There is another class of persons, whose consciences are so accommodating as to permit them to adhere *wherever* the loaves and fishes are to be found in greatest abundance. They have a particular regard for national churches, though they are not very squeamish as to the kind of Establishment to which they adhere, seeing that their devotion is kept alive, not so much by the thought of a pure creed, or an orthodox

\* Reasons for not acceding, &c.

confession, as of a well-filled granary. This class must, of course, regard the conduct of the Seceders as a species of madness, in refusing to return to the verdant pastures of the church, after that the door was thrown open to them, and in preferring to trust to the kind providence of God, rather than, to acts of parliament, for their future support. Such persons will never be able to forgive them for voluntarily renouncing well secured stipends, with all their chances of future "augmentations," and casting themselves entirely upon the affections of their people for their own maintenance and that of their families.

With the exception of these two classes, there are few, who, when they take a calm and dispassionate view of all the circumstances of the case, will not be ready to admit, that the four brethren, in refusing to accept the proffered boon, acted a conscientious and disinterested, as well as a wise, part. They showed themselves to be men of a sound understanding, and of enlightened views, in not again thrusting their necks into the yoke, after that they had once escaped from their former trammels. If they had returned to the Establishment without having obtained the redress of the grievances on account of which they had seceded, their minds must have been incessantly fretted by the oppressive measures of the church courts; and they must either have been frequently entering protests against measures of which they did not approve, or, by silently submitting, they must have had the appearance of acquiescing in them. By returning within the pale of the church, they must have laid their account with being carried along with the current of defection, which they would have found themselves unable successfully to resist. Whereas by remaining without, and forming themselves into a separate communion, altogether independent of political influence, they would thus be able to give full effect to the laws which Christ has laid down for the government of his church; and at the same time, they would have it in their power to afford relief to multitudes of their countrymen, who had long been groaning under evils inflicted on them by the mal-administration of the ruling party.

The proceedings of the Assembly, which met in 1735, were of a mixed kind. Whether it was that the ecclesiastical rulers had already begun to act with the fear of the Secession before their eyes; or whether they were desirous to conciliate, more than they had yet done, the popular party in the church; so it was, that the spirit of reformation which had begun to make its appearance in the last Assembly, characterized, to a certain extent, the proceedings of this. With the exception of one or two unpopular settlements

which this Assembly sanctioned, their proceedings, upon the whole, deserve praise rather than censure. Persons belonging to parishes where ministers had been intruded by violence, were permitted to have the ordinances administered to them by neighbouring ministers, so far as the synod or presbytery to which they belonged might see it to be for edification. An act for preserving unity, and for preventing error within the church, was agreed to. An excellent overture, recommending and pointing out the necessity of a more evangelical mode of preaching than generally prevailed, was introduced, and sent down to the different presbyteries, to be approved of by them, before it should be finally adopted. The Commission was enjoined to consider some offensive passages in certain publications of Mr. Archibald Campbell, Professor of Divinity and Church History at St. Andrews, and they were to be prepared to report at next meeting of Assembly. A deputation was appointed to proceed to London, to present petitions to the king and parliament for the repeal of the patronage act. Such proceedings as these, on the part of the Assembly, whatever might be the motives in which they originated, indicated at least a desire to conciliate those whom their past conduct had tended to alienate.

These proceedings, however, effected no change in the sentiments of the Seceders. So far from being satisfied with them, they considered the work of reformation as retrograding, rather than advancing. Accordingly, when the Associate Presbytery met in the month of August 1735, after long and serious deliberation, and after frequent and earnest prayer to God for the Divine direction, the vote was put from the chair, "Proceed to acts of jurisdiction, or not?" when it carried unanimously in the affirmative, to "Proceed." Only Mr. Wilson, who cherished much longer than any of his brethren the hope of being reunited to the church, expressed himself on this occasion as not altogether clear about the matter. In consequence of this vote, Messrs. Moncrieff, Wilson, and Fisher were appointed to prepare a draught of an assertory act, or to extend the Testimony formerly published, and to embody in it a judicial condemnation of the various steps of defection which had been pursued by the Church of Scotland from the year 1650 downward till that period.

In many parts of the country, the people, not choosing to countenance the ministrations of intruders, had abandoned the parish churches, and had formed themselves into associations for prayer; waiting to see whether any favourable change should take place in affairs, whereby a prospect might be opened up to them of obtaining deliverance from their

grievances. Their eyes were naturally turned toward the Associate Presbytery; and so soon as it was known that the Seceders had resolved to continue in a state of separation from the national church, applications were made to the Presbytery, from various quarters, craving that they would adopt measures, as speedily as possible, for giving relief to those who were groaning under the evils of patronage. At a meeting of the Presbytery, which was held at Kinross in the month of December, commissioners appeared from the parish of Muckhart, and laid on the Presbytery's table a paper subscribed by one hundred heads of families, declaring their secession from the Established Church, and craving that the Presbytery would send them supply of sermon, and would take the necessary steps for licensing young men to preach the gospel. At the same meeting, a similar application was made from the parish of Kinross. The Presbytery, who showed the greatest caution throughout all their proceedings, delayed the consideration of both these petitions till a future meeting. In the month of February, in the following year (1736), this business was again resumed, when the Presbytery granted the prayer of the petitions so far, that they appointed Mr. Erskine to preach to the people of Muckhart, and to baptize the children of such of the parents as should be certified by the elders of the parish; also to hold one or more diets of catechising, as he should see proper. Mr. Moncrieff was appointed to grant the same privileges to the people of Kinross; but with regard to the licensing of young men, the Presbytery were not yet prepared to give a definite answer. At this meeting, commissioners appeared from several of the parishioners of Portmoak, also from the united societies in and about Edinburgh, craving that the Presbytery would send some of their number to dispense religious ordinances amongst them. The answer which the Presbytery returned was, that they would take their case into consideration.

Soon after this period, the brethren held a meeting for the purpose of confessing to one another the sinful part which they had acted, in not bearing proper testimony against the decision of the Assembly 1729, in the case of Professor Simson, whereby he was dismissed from the bar without any adequate censure being inflicted on him. Each of the brethren rose up in his place, and expressed the deep sense which he had of his sinful silence in that business; and it was agreed that the confession of each should be recorded in their minutes. Mr. Moncrieff acknowledged that he was guilty of a sinful omission, in that, being a member of said Assembly, he did not protest against their decision, when they continued Mr. Simson in the communion of the church, and recognised him both as a minister

and as a professor of divinity, after he had been convicted of blaspheming the Son of God by impugning his supreme Deity. Mr. Moncrieff having made this acknowledgment, submitted himself to whatever censure the Presbytery might be pleased to inflict. Mr. Erskine expressed his sorrow, in that, while he had joined in the protest which was taken by Mr. Thomas Boston against the decision, he did not insist on having it marked in the minutes, after that it had been fallen from. Mr. Fisher stated, that though he was not a member of the Assembly, yet, being present, he considered that it was a sinful weakness in him not to offer his protest, nor to bear any kind of testimony whatever against a proceeding so derogatory to the honour of the Saviour. These three brethren, having made their acknowledgments, were admonished one by one at the bar of the Presbytery, and they were individually exhorted to greater dependence upon the Lord, and to greater steadfastness in his cause for the future. With regard to Mr. Wilson, he craved that it might be marked, that though he was not a member of the Assembly 1729, neither had been present at it, yet he took blame to himself in that, when the aforesaid decision was reported to the presbytery of Perth, of which he was a member, he did not adopt any method of testifying his disapprobation of it, until he joined along with a number of other ministers in the Representation of 1732. The Presbytery, after considering the circumstances of Mr. Wilson's case, did not deem it necessary that any admonition should be tendered to him.

While I respect the motives which influenced the conduct of these good men, on the present occasion, and while I give them full credit for sincerity in the confessions and acknowledgments which they made to one another, yet I am inclined to think that they displayed an excess of zeal in making their past conduct the subject of judicial inquiry. The proceeding also was at least novel, if not altogether irregular, for persons who, according to their own admission, were involved in the same guilt, with the exception of Mr. Wilson, the moderator of the Presbytery, alternately to act the part of reprovers and reproved; to be one while standing at the bar receiving the censure of their brethren, and to be another while engaged in inflicting censure for the very same sin of which they themselves had been guilty. Persons chargeable with the same trespass may confess to one another; but we do not see what authority they have, the one to rebuke the other.

In the mean time, the General Assembly met on the 13th of May, 1736, and as there was still an expectation cherished by many, that the Seceders might yet return to the church, much anxiety was felt as to the course they might pursue.

Some of the proceedings of this Assembly were such as to indicate an appearance of reformation, while others of them were of an opposite description. The overture concerning preaching, which had been remitted to presbyteries by last Assembly, was now finally adopted. By this excellent act, it was earnestly recommended to all ministers and preachers to insist frequently, in their sermons, "upon the truth, necessity, and excellency of supernatural revelation, the supreme Deity of the Son and Holy Ghost, as well as of the Father, together with the oneness of the Godhead, our sinful and lost estate by nature, the necessity of supernatural grace, and of faith in the righteousness of Christ, without which the best works cannot please God." It was further recommended to them, "when they handle the doctrines of God's redeeming love and of his free grace in the justification and salvation of sinners, the blessings of the Redeemer's purchase, and privileges of the new and better covenant, to study to manage these subjects, so as to lead their hearers unto an abhorrence of sin, the love of God and our neighbours, and the practice of universal holiness, seeing it is one great end of the gospel to destroy the works of the devil, and to teach men to live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world." They were to forbear delivering any thing in public that might tend more to amusement than edification; and they were exhorted to beware of bringing into their sermons and public discourses matters of doubtful disputation, which tend to gender strife, rather than to promote the edification of Christians.\*

Another excellent act, which received the sanction of this Assembly, was one against the intrusion of ministers into vacant congregations. The Assembly declared, that it is, and has been since the Reformation, the principle of this church, that no minister shall be intruded into any parish contrary to the will of the congregation; and they, therefore, recommended to all judicatories of the church, "to have a due regard to the said principle in planting vacant congregations, and that all presbyteries be at pains to bring about harmony and unanimity in congregations, and to avoid every thing that may excite or encourage unreasonable exceptions in people against a worthy person that may be proposed to be their minister, in the present situation and circumstances of the church, so as none be intruded into such parishes, as they regard the glory of God and edification of the body of Christ."

Had the Assembly, instead of permitting such acts as these

\* Acts of Assembly 1736.

to remain a dead letter in their minute-book, taken proper measures to enforce compliance with them upon all who were subject to their authority, it would have had a beneficial effect in checking the progress of discontent, and in restoring peace to the church; but they completely nullified the good effects, which the passing of such acts was fitted to produce, by showing a disregard of them in practice. One or two glaring instances of this occur in the proceedings of this same Assembly. While they declared, that it was, and always had been since the Reformation, a principle of their church, that no minister should be intruded into any parish contrary to the will of the congregation, yet with singular inconsistency did these very men, who emitted this declaration, dismiss a complaint of the parishioners of Denny against a sentence of the Commission, ordering the settlement of Mr. James Stirling in that parish, though the congregation were almost unanimous in opposing him. They further showed how sincere they were in making the above declaration, by ordering the presbytery and synod of Dumfries to enrol, as a member of their judicatories, Mr. James Pursell who had been intruded into the parish of Troqueer, in the face of a violent oppositon; they were enjoined to support him in his ministry, and to endeavour to bring the people to submit to it.

Again, of what use was it to publish acts recommending to all their ministers and preachers to pay strict attention in their discourses to sound doctrine, while they took no pains to enforce compliance with these acts; but on the contrary, showed a disposition on every occasion to treat with the greatest lenity those who taught sentiments that were opposed to their own standards, and to the word of God? A notable instance of this occurred during the present Assembly. A committee having been appointed by the Commission of last Assembly to examine certain publications\* of Professor Campbell of St. Andrews, the following objectionable passages were found to occupy a prominent place in them. First, that men are unable, by their natural powers, to find out the being of a God. Secondly, that the laws of nature are in themselves a sufficient rule to guide rational minds to happiness. Thirdly, that self-love is the sole principle and motive of all virtuous and religious actions. Fourthly, that our Lord's disciples, during his lifetime, only expected a temporal deliverance and worldly kingdom; that between his death and resurrection

\* The titles of these publications are, "*Oratio de vanitate luminis naturæ.*" "*The Apostles no Enthusiasts;*" and "*An Inquiry into the Original of Moral Virtue.*"

they concluded him to be a cheat and an impostor ; and that before his resurrection they had no notion of his divinity. By the first of these positions, the Professor was considered as striking at the root of natural religion. By the second, he was considered as teaching that a supernatural revelation of a Saviour, and faith in him, are not necessary to the happiness of fallen man. By the third he was apprehended to make the glory of God only a subordinate end, and a regard to it only a subordinate motive to the desire of our own happiness. And in the fourth, he was considered as using language highly disrespectful to our Lord's disciples, and not consistent with gospel history on that subject.

When the committee presented their report to the Assembly, they gave at the same time Professor Campbell's explanation of his own language. The substance of the Professor's defence was, that his meaning was quite different from what his words expressed ; that though he had certainly made use of the language imputed to him, yet he did not hold the sentiments which were attempted to be drawn from it. The Assembly, notwithstanding the great profession of zeal which they had made about orthodoxy, did not deem it necessary to give any formal judgment in the matter. They conceived that what the committee had done would be a sufficient warning against the *supposed errors* (these are their own gentle terms) of Mr. Campbell ; and, as in the case of Professor Simson, they appointed the matter to *rest here*. This mild deliverance they followed up with a recommendation to Professor Campbell, and to all ministers and teachers of divinity whatsoever, within the national church, "to be cautious in their preaching and teaching, or writing, not to use doubtful expressions or propositions, which may be constructed in an erroneous sense, or lead the hearers or readers into error, however sound such words or propositions may be in themselves, or however well intended, but to hold fast the form of sound words."\*

Whatever hopes of a reunion might linger in the bosoms of any of the Seceding brethren, previous to the meeting of the Assembly in 1736, these appear to have been completely dissipated by the proceedings of that Assembly. Even Mr. Wilson was now quite prepared to go along with his brethren in performing acts of ecclesiastical jurisdiction. After waiting for nearly three years, and seeing little or no prospect of a reformation taking place within the national church, the path of duty now seemed to be clear to him, which was, to preach the gospel wherever an opening should be presented to him in providence, and to adopt, in connexion with his brethren, such

\* Acts of Assembly 1736.

other measures as might be necessary for giving relief to those who were anxiously soliciting the benefits of a gospel ministry from the Secession.

During this summer, Mr. Wilson and Mr. Fisher took a journey into the West of Scotland, where a considerable interest had already been excited by the events which had taken place. In the course of their excursion, they paid a visit to Dalry. Mr. Wilson, having in early life received a call to labour in this parish, the people felt a strong attachment to him, and earnestly requested him to preach to them on the present occasion. With this request Mr. Wilson cheerfully complied. "A tent was erected, and a vast multitude assembled to hear him preach. Towards the conclusion of the sermon, the patron of the parish, riding home in that direction from his usual place of worship, came to the spot, and on seeing the crowd, inquired what it meant. Being informed that the people were listening to the ministers of the Secession, who had come there to preach, he joined the assembly, and heard the remaining part of the sermon. When the worship was concluded, he introduced himself to the two ministers, and engaged them to breakfast with him next morning. This gentleman had a preacher of the established church residing in his family as tutor or chaplain. On returning home, he told him that he had been hearing the Seceder ministers, and had been vastly pleased with them, and that they were coming next morning to breakfast, when he wished to have all the points of difference between them and his church fully discussed. The chaplain, however, left the house in the morning, before Messrs. Wilson and Fisher arrived, and did not return till they were gone. The patron afterward upbraided him for his cowardice, saying, that the Assembly had cast out these able and excellent men, and that he, convinced of their innocence, durst not venture to face them."\*

Applications to the Associate Presbytery, for sermon, now rapidly increased. Some of these were from remote districts of the country. At their meeting in November 1736, a letter was sent to them from several societies in connexion with the old dissenters in the south-west districts of Scotland, stating their destitute condition since the death of Mr. John Hepburn, and requesting that the Presbytery would do something for their relief. A similar application was received at this meeting, from no fewer than 280 families in Lisbourne, in Ireland. The petitioners complained that the presbytery within whose bounds they resided, had intruded upon them a minister contrary to their choice, and they requested that they might be

\* Ferrier's Memoirs of the Rev. W. Wilson, p. 306.



received into the communion of the Secession, and that a properly qualified person should be sent to break amongst them the bread of life.\* To both of these applications the Presbytery gave encouraging answers.

Though the brethren had been in the habit of occasionally preaching in places where the people invited them, yet, from motives of delicacy, and with a view to show that they were not rash in their proceedings, they had hitherto refrained from licensing young men to preach the gospel, even though they had been frequently importuned by the people to do so. Now, however, they began to turn their attention seriously to this subject. Having renounced all hopes of a reunion with the church, they considered it a duty imperative on them, to adopt measures for extending and perpetuating the benefits of the Secession. Accordingly, on the 4th of November, the Presbytery took this subject under their serious consideration, and a motion was made that one of the brethren be appointed to take the inspection of youth to be trained up for the holy ministry. Messrs. Erskine and Moncrieff were appointed a committee to prepare an overture, which should regulate the Presbytery's procedure in this important matter. On the following day, these brethren gave in their report, and submitted to the consideration of the Presbytery the following overture : — "Considering the lamentable and desolate condition of many parishes in Scotland, by reason of the violent intrusions that have been made upon them, and likewise considering the frequent and repeated applications to this Presbytery, from several quarters of the land, for sending forth labourers into the Lord's vineyard, that so they might have the benefit of the gospel, and the ordinances thereof, therefore the committee are of opinion that this Presbytery should make some step towards the relief of the Lord's oppressed heritage, especially consider-

\* In a note to Ferrier's Memoir of the Rev. W. Wilson (p. 381), we have the following account of the manner in which the Secession was first introduced into Ireland. It illustrates the wisdom of Divine Providence, in making the most common-place events productive of great and lasting good. "The father of the late Rev. W. Jamieson, of Kilwinning, was a sea-faring man; and, in the course of his business, had occasion to touch at one of the sea-ports in the north of Ireland. From the well-known sympathies of similar minds, the religious sailor soon found himself in intercourse with some of the religious people in the town. At that time, Arminianism seemed to be making similar progress among the presbyterians in Ireland, as it was making in Scotland. He reported to his friends in that country, the determined stand which had been made in the General Assembly in Scotland, and the Secession which had, in consequence, taken place. The result of their intercourse, and of his communications, was an agreement on the part of the Irish, immediately to apply to the Associate Presbytery to *come over and help them*. It was by this apparently fortuitous occurrence, from this small and precious seed, borne by the winds, that the Secession in Ireland has sprung up, and branched out into its present magnitude."

ing the loud call in Providence thereto, by nominating and appointing one of their number to take the inspection of the youth that should offer themselves to be trained up for the holy ministry, and also that every one of the brethren should carefully look out for faithful men, to whom the ministry should be committed." \*

After some discussion as to whether the question should now be finally determined, or the further consideration of it be delayed till next meeting, this overture was unanimously adopted: And the presbytery having proceeded to the choice of a Professor, Mr. Wilson was with one voice appointed to the important charge. The choice could not have fallen on an individual better qualified, in every respect, for training up young men for the office of the ministry. Mr. Wilson had received the best education which the Scottish Universities could furnish. His natural talents were excellent; and they had been thoroughly improved by a course of intense study in the early period of his life. He was possessed of the most amiable dispositions; and his character stood high in the country for integrity and disinterestedness. And to crown the whole, he was a person of the most ardent piety, and thoroughly versed in the knowledge of the Scriptures. Such was the person to whom the Presbytery intrusted the training up of candidates for the ministry.

At a subsequent meeting, Mr. Wilson announced, that he would commence his course of theological tuition in the ensuing spring; that the months of March, April, and May, would be devoted by him to that purpose; and, in the meantime, the brethren gave notice to their correspondents in the different societies throughout the kingdom, that they would receive into their seminary students who were properly recommended. To show that the first ministers of the Secession were not the illiterate men whom some have supposed them to be, it may be proper here to state, that an intimate knowledge of the Latin language was necessary on the part of those who attended Mr. Wilson's prelections, as he not only read his lectures, but conducted the whole business of his class in that language.

In the month of December, the Presbytery gave their final sanction to a document, the preparation and revising of which had occupied no small portion of their time during several meetings. This was "An Act, Declaration, and Testimony for the doctrine, worship, discipline, and government of the church of Scotland." To distinguish it from the first Testimony which the Presbytery published, this production has generally been known by the name of the *Judicial Testimony*. The Presby-

\* Minutes of the Associate Presbytery.

tery did not intend, by this publication, to exhibit anew the grounds of the Secession; this they had already clearly and fully done in their former publications. Neither was it designed by them as a new standard of church communion; nor was it ever placed by them on a level with the Confession of Faith, and those other subordinate standards which they already possessed. Though a general approbation of it was required of those who seceded to them, yet it was no bar in the way of persons being admitted to their communion, if they declared that they could not assent to the truth of all the historical statements which it contained. A much more extensive course of reading than most of the people possessed, would have been necessary to have enabled them to form an accurate and enlightened judgment of the historical statements which the Testimony contained; and it would have been foolish in the Presbytery to have required the people to give an assent to the truth of such statements, as a term of their admission to the privileges of the church. With this folly, however, the Presbytery were not chargeable. Multitudes were admitted by them who declared that they could not give any such assent; and ministers were ordained by them who made the same declaration.

The object of the Presbytery in publishing their Judicial Testimony, was to declare to the world what God had done for the Church of Scotland during former periods of her history; to condemn the manifold defections with which she had been latterly chargeable; to vindicate and establish the truth, in opposition to prevailing errors; and to stir up, among all classes, a greater zeal for the purity of religion, and for the maintenance of the cause of Christ. In the introduction, they express themselves in the following terms on this subject. They say, that "they judge a testimony of this kind necessary for the information of the present generation, who have generally lost the knowledge both of what God had done for Scotland, and of the grounds and causes of his righteous quarrel and controversy against us; necessary for the conviction and humiliation of all ranks of persons; necessary to preserve and maintain the truths of God, and an useful mean to transmit them to following generations in their purity."

Mr. Wilson, on whom had devolved the greatest share of the labour in preparing the second Testimony, when defending it against the attacks of Mr. Currie, gives the following account of the place which this document was designed to hold amongst the official publications of the Presbytery, and of the uses which it was intended to serve:—"In the Act and Testimony of the Associate Presbytery, our received standards of doctrine, worship, government, and discipline, are parti-

cularly applied and laid against the errors that have sprung up in this church, and against such corruptions and defections as have taken place therein, by which our subordinate standards have been either obscured or perverted as to their genuine sense and meaning, and by which also palpable deviations have been made from them. Hence, in the assertory part of the Act and Testimony, the truths asserted are viewed as agreeable to the Word of God, the supreme standard, and also as agreeable to our subordinate standards. Again, in the condemnatory part of the Act and Testimony, the errors, corruptions, or defections condemned, are viewed as contrary to the word of God, and our subordinate standards, received and adopted by this church in her reforming times; therefore the Act and Testimony of the Associate Presbytery is not a new standard of church communion, far less is it to be equalled with our received standards; but it is an application and declaration of their genuine sense and meaning, in opposition to the errors, defections, and corruptions that have prevailed both in former and present times."<sup>a</sup>

Whatever difference of opinion there may be as to the merits of this production, few will be inclined to question, that the object which the Presbytery had in view, in publishing it, was good; and, from the interest which was excited, by the publication of it, amongst a large portion of the people, there is reason to believe that most beneficial effects were produced by it. By means of it, men's eyes were opened to see the errors and defections that prevailed; they were led to humble themselves on account of their iniquities, by which the wrath of God had been provoked; they were stirred up to contend earnestly for the truth, as it is in Christ Jesus; the progress of corruption was checked, error was exposed, and practical godliness was revived to a considerable extent among the people. Whilst, however, the Judicial Testimony deserves to be spoken of in laudatory terms, on account of the general tenor of its statements; and while it was calculated to be useful, on account of its directing public attention to the prevailing evils of the day; while at the same time it gave a faithful and luminous exhibition of the truth, there are several things in it unworthy of the excellent men who penned it. Amongst the number of those evils, for instance, which they deplore and condemn, they mention the union betwixt England and Scotland, the toleration granted in the reign of Queen Anne, and the repeal of the penal statutes against witches. Let not my readers smile at the simplicity of the Seceders in testifying against

<sup>a</sup> Wilson's Defence (Continuation), p. 148.

these things, as national evils; for the sentiments which they entertained on these points were not peculiar to them; they were held by them in common with a considerable portion of the Church of Scotland. The Commission of the General Assembly remonstrated against certain clauses in the treaty of union, on the ground that, if the Scottish nation agreed to them, they would thereby be guilty of *homologating* the English hierarchy and its ceremonies: and when addressing Queen Anne on the subject of the toleration, they make use of the most lugubrious language. They say "it is such as gives a large licence almost to all error and blasphemy; throws up all good discipline, to the dishonour of God, and the scandal and ruin of the Christian religion."

The publication of the Testimony tended considerably to widen the breach betwixt the Seceders and the popular party in the national church. Hitherto they had been in the habit of assisting one another at sacramental occasions; but after this period, this friendly intercourse appears for the most part to have been given up. With the exception of Mr. Wardlaw of Dunfermline, and Mr. Hamilton of Stirling, and probably one or two more, the Seceding brethren and the brethren of the Establishment were so far alienated from one another, that they had now little or no ministerial intercourse. The Judicial Testimony of the Presbytery was keenly attacked by one who had formerly been in habits of friendship with them. This assailant was Mr. John Currie, minister of Kinglassie, who stood forth as the great champion of the national church, and exerted all the ability of which he was master, to demolish the infant cause of the Secession. Mr. Currie's attack produced one good effect; it called forth from the pen of Mr. Wilson a most able, learned, and Christian defence of the Presbytery. If all controversial writings had been conducted with the same candour, and the same good temper, as this excellent defence, it would have been well for the church and the world. With such an antagonist as Mr. Wilson opposed to him, we need not wonder that Mr. Currie's efforts to arrest the progress of the Secession should have been ineffectual. The Secession prospered in spite of all his attempts to write it down. His labours, however, were not altogether profitless to himself; for the Assembly, in consideration of his good services, in attempting to demolish the Secession by means of his controversial pamphlets, granted him the sum of £61 sterling. Thus, if he did not acquire much fame by his writings, they procured for him something still more substantial.

About this period, an event took place which, though properly belonging to civil history, yet, on account of the influence which it had upon the progress of the Secession, de-

serves to be recorded. One Wilson, a native of Kirkcaldy, in Fife, having been extensively engaged in smuggling transactions, was at length caught in one of his illegal adventures, and goods to a considerable amount were seized by the revenue officers. Resolved to recover, if not the property which had been taken from him, at least a remuneration for it, he, along with an associate of the name of Robertson, watched the collector on his return from one of his rounds, and breaking into the room where he slept, robbed him of money to an equal amount with the goods which he had lost. Both Wilson and his companion were apprehended that same evening; and being soon after tried, they were sentenced to be executed. Smuggling, at that period, was scarcely regarded as a crime, and a strong feeling of sympathy was excited on account of the fate of the condemned individuals.

Before the day of execution arrived, an occurrence took place which rendered Wilson a great favourite with the populace. It was then customary for those under sentence of death to be conducted to the Tolbooth church, to hear sermon upon Sabbath. Wilson, intent upon saving the life of his fellow-prisoner, who had been brought into his present unhappy situation chiefly through Wilson's instrumentality, availed himself of one of these occasions, for the purpose of accomplishing his rescue. They were guarded by three soldiers. Wilson, watching his opportunity, caught hold of a soldier with each hand, and, after having called upon his companion to run, he seized upon the third with his teeth, and being a person of great muscular power, he held the whole fast until Robertson made his escape; when, without making any further effort, he calmly resigned himself to his fate. The audience, struck with admiration at such an uncommon display of courage, so far from making any attempt to impede Robertson's flight, rather opened a way for him to escape. Wilson's exploit became the theme of universal discourse, and the feelings of the people were so strongly excited on his behalf, that serious apprehensions were entertained by the magistrates, lest an attempt would be made to rescue him on the day of execution. To prevent this the city-guard, under the command of Captain John Porteous, was mustered in all its force: three rounds of shot were given to each man; and regular troops were admitted into the city, that they might be ready to act, should there be any occasion for their co-operation. No disturbance ensued during the time of execution; but when the dead body was about to be cut down, a shower of stones from the populace exasperated the guard. Porteous ordered them to fire upon the crowd; the result of which was, that several lives were lost and a number of persons wounded. Popular indig-

nation was roused to a high pitch against Captain Porteous, on account of this rash act; he was accused of the murder of his fellow-citizens, and, a precognition being taken, he was that evening committed to the Tolbooth to await his trial. The charge was afterwards substantiated against him, and he was condemned to be executed. A number of gentlemen, however, pitying his fate, and looking upon him as having been harshly dealt with, drew up a statement of his case, and presented a petition to the crown for mercy. The Queen, who then acted as regent in the absence of her husband George II., granted a reprieve of six weeks, to allow time for proper inquiry to be made.

This act of royal clemency roused the fury of the populace beyond all bounds, and rather than that the unhappy Porteous should escape, they resolved to take the execution of the law into their own hands. On the evening, previous to the day on which his sentence was to have been carried into effect, a tumultuous mob assembled; and having secured the city gates, cut off the communication from the castle, and mastered the town-guard, they set fire to the door of the prison: and having dragged Porteous from his cell, they conducted him to the usual place of execution and hanged him over a dyer's pole, regardless of his cries for mercy. After having performed this bloody deed, the mob dispersed, and left the streets as quiet as if nothing had taken place.

Such a daring outrage, committed in defiance of all law, and almost in the face of the magistrates, excited universal astonishment. When the government received intelligence of it, they were filled with the highest indignation, and the most prompt and vigorous measures were adopted to discover the perpetrators, and to bring them to punishment. A reward of two hundred pounds was offered for the discovery of any of the individuals concerned in the business. It was more than insinuated that the magistrates had connived at the matter; the Lord Provost was declared incapable of ever after holding any office, and it was with the utmost difficulty that some of the most influential Scottish noblemen in parliament could prevent a bill from passing, depriving the city of Edinburgh of its charter, destroying her gates, and taking away her town-guard. The Duke of Argyle, in a speech which he made on the occasion, with the view of saving the credit of the magistrates, wickedly attempted to fasten suspicion upon the Seceding ministers, as if they had been instrumental in stirring up a spirit of disaffection among the people:—"Great insinuations, my lords," observed the noble Duke, "have been made, that this and many other tumults that have frequently happened in the United Kingdom, have been owing to the

oppression of the magistrate. For my part, my lords, I have heard of no particular acts of oppression, and I believe I may venture to say, neither have any of your lordships, as we must all have done, if any such had been. But, my lords, can riots proceed from no other cause, but from oppression in the magistrate? Have people no other motives but the suggestions of despair? I believe, my lords, we may find from the history of past times, that they have always had, and from the experience of the present, that they still continue to have, other motives.

"This riotous and rebellious spirit of theirs does not proceed from any oppression of the governors, or civil magistrates of that country, as has been strongly insinuated, but from a few fanatical preachers lately started up in that country, who, by their sermons and other ways, instil into the minds of the vulgar and ignorant such enthusiastical notions as are inconsistent with all government, by making sedition and rebellion a principle of their religion. From this cause, I am inclined to think, the tumult at Edinburgh proceeded, and to this is owing that ill-judged fidelity of the guilty toward one another, by which the secret before the execution was made impenetrable, and by which the discovery of the persons concerned has since been rendered impossible. But of the inhabitants of Edinburgh, I am convinced, there are very few tainted with these principles, because they seldom or never hear such doctrine."<sup>a</sup>

Never were insinuations more vile or unfounded thrown out against any class of men, than these which his Grace of Argyle threw out against the Seceders; they were unsupported by even the shadow of evidence, and if his Grace had no other way of accounting for the Porteous riot, except by injuring the characters of innocent men, it would have been much better for him to have remained silent. There is no reason to believe, that any of the Scottish clergy were connected, either directly or indirectly, with such brutal proceedings; and as for those belonging to the Secession, they were men of acknowledged worth and piety; their moral conduct was in the highest degree exemplary, so that even their worst enemies were not able to fix a stain upon it; they were conscientiously attached to the constitution of their country; and, as we shall have occasion to notice in the course of this narrative, both in their ecclesiastical and in their individual capacity, they showed a uniform willingness to strengthen the hands of government.

With the view of discovering the persons concerned in the

<sup>a</sup> Struthers' History of Scotland, Vol. II. p. 39.

murder of Captain Porteous, an act was passed which excited great dissatisfaction in the country, amongst both ministers and people. This act required, that all who had fled, through fear of being suspected, should deliver themselves up, upon pain of suffering death if they should afterward be apprehended. Persons concealing any of these fugitives were also, upon conviction, to suffer death : offenders, who should give evidence against any of their accomplices, were to be pardoned ; and any person giving information that should lead to the conviction of any of the criminals, was to receive the sum of two hundred pounds. But the most obnoxious part of the act, so far as the clergy were concerned, was, that all the ministers of Scotland were required to read this act from the pulpit, during the time of divine service, on the first Sabbath of every month, during a whole year ; and any minister, refusing to do so, was, for the first offence, to be declared incapable of sitting or voting in any church judicatory ; and, for the second, to be declared incapable of " taking, holding, or enjoying any ecclesiastical benefice in Scotland."

A great number of the ministers refused to read this act, chiefly on the following grounds :—That some parts of the act were inconsistent with the principles of justice ; that it did not form any part of their ministerial work, as heralds of the gospel of peace, to proclaim the sanguinary laws of men ; that they did not recognise any right, which the king and parliament had, to dictate to them what duty they were to perform during the time of divine service ; and above all, that it would have been surrendering the liberties and privileges of the church, to have acknowledged the principle obviously implied in the penalty annexed to the act, viz. that the king and parliament had the power of suspending and deposing ministers, or in other words, of administering ecclesiastical discipline. To have admitted this principle would have been an homologating of erastianism in its most offensive form ; it would have been surrendering the power of inflicting church censure into the hands of those who had no right, by the laws of Christ, to exercise it.

On these grounds did many of the ministers of Scotland refuse to read the Porteous act. The greater part of the ministers, however, read it either in one form or another. Some made no scruple about reading the whole of it ; others endeavoured to compromise the matter with their conscience, by reading only a part. Some read it during the whole year, and others during only a part of the year. In some instances, they read it to empty benches ; for in certain districts the people were so highly indignant, they would not remain in the church during the time that the minister was em-

ployed in reading the act. So displeased were they with those ministers that complied, they that would not even hear them preach, but attended the ministry of those who refused to read; or, as not unfrequently happened, connected themselves with the Secession.\* It does not appear that any attempt was made to carry into effect the penalty of the law against such of the ministers as were contumacious: none were deprived of their office for refusing to read. In this respect, government gave a proof of its wisdom, as any attempt to enforce compliance with such an unpopular act, would have roused the country into a flame, and been productive of the most disastrous effects. The applications made to the Associate Presbytery, during the period of these commotions, were numerous. Their conduct, in reference to the act which agitated the country, was firm and dignified. They not only refused compliance with it, but boldly condemned it as an unwarrantable encroachment upon the headship of Christ,—as a thrust aimed at the freedom and independence of his spiritual kingdom. The General Assembly afterwards ungenerously attempted to fasten upon them the charge of disaffection, in consequence of their making such a manly avowal of their sentiments; but this charge the brethren successfully repelled; and, both in their publications, and also by their loyal peaceable behaviour, they gave the most satisfactory evidence of their being warmly attached to the constitution of their country, and to the family that sat upon the throne.

\* It is reported of a minister in the south of Scotland, who had more of the wag than the martyr in him, that, being desirous to maintain himself in the good graces both of the government and of the people, he endeavoured to compromise the matter betwixt them, in the following manner. He gave the people a hint to leave the church, before he commenced reading the act, by telling them that, though the law made it imperative on him to read the act, yet there was no clause in it making it imperative on them to sit and hear it read.

### CHAPTER III.

Accession of Messrs. Thomas Mair and Ralph Erskine to the Associate Presbytery.—Declaration of these brethren.—Adherents of the Secession form themselves into societies for prayer and religious conference.—Questions proposed to the Presbytery concerning terms of communion.—Lesly and his adherents excommunicated.—Proceedings of the General Assembly in 1737.—Contentings of the people at Denny.—Violent settlement at Muckhart.—Act of the Associate Presbytery asserting the right of popular election.—Numerous petitions presented for a supply of sermon.—The Presbytery resolve to license young men.—Formula of questions adopted.—Messrs. Hunter and Clarkson entered on trials for licence.—Their declaration concerning the civil magistrate.—Mr. Hunter licensed.—The General Assembly alarmed at the rapid progress of the Secession.—A libel put into the hands of the Seceding brethren.—The Presbytery publish the libel, with answers.—Resolve to appear at the bar of the Assembly.—An act of declination prepared.—Outline of this act.—Proceedings of the General Assembly in 1739.—The act of declination read at the bar of the Assembly, by the moderator of the Presbytery.—Overture concerning the Seceding brethren.—Adopted by the Assembly.—Remarks on the overture.—Sentence of deposition pronounced.—Remarks on the sentence.—Conduct of the magistrates towards the Seceding ministers, after their deposition.—The church doors closed against Mr. E. Erskine and Mr. Wilson.—These brethren preach in the open air.—Interesting scenes.

WHEN the Associate Presbytery met in the month of February 1737, their hands were strengthened by the accession of two new members. These were the Rev. Thomas Mair, of Orwell, and the Rev. Ralph Erskine, of Dunfermline. These two brethren, as has been mentioned in a preceding part of the narrative, were present at the formation of the Presbytery, and had all along taken a deep interest in its proceedings; and, if they had remained longer in the national church than their brethren, this was owing to their cherishing the hope that, through the exertions of the faithful party, such a reformation might be accomplished in the judicatories of that church, as would remove all grounds of the Secession. After waiting for some years, and finding that there was little prospect of this hope being realized, they now deemed it their duty to take a more decisive step, and to cast in their lot with the brethren who had already seceded. When the Presbytery met, the moderator stated to them, that this meeting had been called at the special request of Mr. Mair, who had something of importance to communicate; and Mr. Mair being called upon, presented a paper, entitled, "Declaration of Secession from the present judicatories of the Church of Scotland," &c. This paper contained an account

of Mr. Mair's reasons for withdrawing from the National Church, and connecting himself with the Presbytery. These reasons were substantially the same as those which had been already published by the Presbytery.

After Mr. Mair had read his paper, Mr. Ralph Erskine signified his adherence to the statements which it contained ; and presented, at the same time, a written declaration, containing some additional reasons. In this declaration Mr. Erskine stated (and Mr. Mair acquiesced in the same sentiments), that though he withdrew, for the present, from the National Church, and joined his brethren of the Secession, yet he did not by this intend withdrawing from ministerial communion with those pious ministers of the Establishment, who were "groaning under, or wrestling against, the defections of the times." "Neither," said he, "do I hereby intend to preclude myself from the liberty of returning and joining with the judicatories of this church, upon their returning to their duty; and, so far as my joining with the foresaid, or any other ministers, in their lifting up the said testimony, and promoting the end and design thereof, and the said return can consist together; seeing if the judicatories, who at present either unjustly refuse, or unduly delay to receive that testimony, were acting a contrary part, and putting hand to reformation, the same reasons that induce to this withdrawing, would necessarily induce to a returning, which I cordially wish I may quickly see good reason for." Such sentiments as these, which Mr. Erskine expressed, were quite in unison with those entertained by all the members of the Presbytery, and which they had publicly avowed in their reasons of secession. Having received the declarations of the two brethren, they gave them a cordial welcome into their little band.

Almost all the adherents of the Secession, throughout the country, had formed themselves into associations for prayer and religious conference; and the correspondence of the Presbytery was chiefly carried on with these societies. Not having yet licensed any young men to preach the gospel, it was comparatively few of the applications for sermon that they were able to answer. The consequence of which was, that those who were connected with these societies were under the necessity either of meeting by themselves for religious exercise on the Sabbath, or of attending the ministrations of such evangelical ministers, belonging to the Establishment, as might be in their neighbourhood. The Presbytery did not disapprove of the conduct of those who did so, as they themselves had declared their willingness to hold communion with these faithful ministers; it was not from such that they had made a secession. Some of the members of these societies, however, began

to take higher ground, and to question the lawfulness of Seceders giving any countenance to ministers connected with the Established Church, however pious and eminent they might be. One of the district societies in Edinburgh withdrew from the correspondence of the rest on this ground; and, after some altercation, the matter was referred to the Presbytery. A paper, containing a variety of questions with regard to the terms of ministerial and Christian communion, was presented to them. Of these questions the following is a specimen:—  
 “Whether one can make secession from the Established Church, and yet hold communion with those who are her members, whether they be ministers or private Christians?”  
 “Whether the circumstance of these ministers or Christians being gracious persons did in the least remove the offence taken from their joining with the corrupt Established Church?”  
 “Whether refusing to join in the testimony, if it be a term of communion, is not a reason of secession from such persons?”  
 The Presbytery, resolving themselves into a committee, took this paper into consideration, but avoided giving definite answers to the questions which it contained. They exhorted the societies in Edinburgh to endeavour to live at peace with one another, and not to attempt fixing the terms of ministerial or Christian communion; and they added, that the Presbytery would turn their attention to this subject as soon as convenient.

This society occasioned the Presbytery some farther trouble, for soon after this period, one of its leaders, a person of the name of Lesly, presented a paper, in which he disowned the civil government of the country, and intimated that it would be his duty, should an occasion present, to rise in arms against it. The Presbytery endeavoured to induce him to retract these sentiments; but finding that he pertinaciously adhered to them, they laid him under the sentence of the lesser excommunication, and warned all the other members of the society to withdraw from him. Several of these, having imbibed similar sentiments, refused to comply, upon which they were suspended from their privileges as members of the church; and, after having harassed the Presbytery, for some time, with representations and petitions, they at length renounced their authority altogether, and formed a party of their own.

The General Assembly, in 1736, had declared it to be a principle of the Scottish church, that no minister shall be intruded into any parish contrary to the will of the congregation, and they had enjoined all presbyteries to have a regard to this principle in planting vacant congregations, “as they regarded the glory of God, and the edification of the body of

Christ." After such a declaration as this, emitted by the supreme court, consistency required that every encouragement should be given by the General Assembly to presbyteries when endeavouring to carry this principle into effect, by preventing the settlement of ministers in opposition to the wishes of the congregation. If any proof were wanting to show, that, notwithstanding the declaration which had been thus made, for the purpose of soothing the irritated feelings of the people, there was no serious intention on the part of those who bore sway in the church to permit such an excellent principle to regulate the conduct of presbyteries; this proof will be found in the proceedings of the Assembly which met in 1737.\* This Assembly had under its review no fewer than four cases of contested settlements, and in all of them did they give decisions that were opposed to the principle of non-intrusion. The first case was that of Perth, where the magistrates and a portion of the inhabitants had given a call to Mr. David Black, on the footing of the unpopular act of 1732, which had now been disannulled. Mr. Black's settlement was opposed by the session and a majority of the heads

\* I am not singular in the opinion, which I have expressed, that the Assembly of 1736 were not sincere in the enactment which they made "against the intrusion of ministers;" and that when they enjoined presbyteries to have regard to it in the planting of vacant congregations, they intended by this nothing more than merely to calm the irritation of the people. A writer of high respectability, whom none will accuse of being influenced either by hostility or prejudice against the national church, expresses the same opinion. The remarks which he makes (I believe unwittingly), upon the conduct of the Assembly at this time, do not give us a favourable view of its *honesty*. It tends greatly to strengthen the original grounds of the Secession, when we find such writers, under pretence of apologizing for their church courts, representing them to be so dishonest as to make popular enactments for the purpose of obtaining the good opinion of the people, while they never seriously intended carrying such enactments into effect. The writer, to whom I refer, is the late Sir Henry Moncrieff Wellwood, who, in his *Life of Dr. Erskine*, mentions the act of 1736 as a highly favourable instance of the wish of the Assembly "to conciliate the spirit of the times." But most unfortunately for the credit of the Assembly who passed this act, the Reverend Baronet, in the comments which he makes, represents it as *far from the intention* of that venerable body to follow it up by a train of authoritative decisions: he further states, that an influential portion of the Assembly never regarded it in any other light, than as a concession to the prejudices of the people, and had not the most remote idea that it should influence their decisions in particular cases. "It is scarcely conceivable," he says, "that this act could have done more, than soothe the discontent of the people by conciliatory language; unless more could have been attempted than perhaps was practicable; and unless it had been followed up by a train of authoritative decisions, *which was far from being intended*." "At the same time, it is equally evident, that the members of the church who had been most determined, in disregarding the opposition made to the induction of presentees, if they concurred in this enactment, as they seem to have done, could have intended it as nothing more, than a concession *in terminis*, to the prejudices of the people, *without any view to its influence on their decisions in particular cases*, or to such a change of system as could have had any practical effects."—*Appendix to Moncrieff's Life of Dr. Erskine*, p. 449.

of families, who had given a call to Mr. Henry Lindsay of Bothkennar. The Assembly rejected the call to Mr. Lindsay, and ordered the presbytery of Perth to proceed with Mr. Black's settlement. The second case was that of the parish of Duffus, where one person having received a presentation from the patron, and another person having received a call from a number of the parishioners, the Assembly, forgetting the principle, "that no minister shall be intruded into any parish contrary to the will of the congregation," decided against the people, and in favour of the patron. They, moreover, ordered their moderator to write a letter to her Grace, the Duchess of Gordon, intimating to her this sentence, and expressing their high respect for herself and her noble family. The third case was that of the parish of Monikie, where the presbytery of Dundee refused to execute a sentence of the Commission, ordering them to proceed with the ordination of Mr. George Johnston as minister of that parish. A complaint being made to the Assembly, they ordered the presbytery forthwith to carry the sentence into effect.

But the case of Denny affords a better illustration than any of the preceding ones, of the total disregard of popular right and popular feeling, which characterized the proceedings of the Assembly at that period. I shall here give, from an authentic source, a detailed account of this case, not so much on account of there being any thing extraordinary connected with it, as because it furnishes a fair specimen of the treatment which the people received from their ecclesiastical rulers in a great variety of instances, and also shows us what necessity there was for the Secession taking place at the time it did, that relief might be afforded to those who were groaning under such oppressive treatment.

The parish of Denny having become vacant by the death of their pastor, a presentation was given to Mr. James Stirling; and the Laird of Herbertshire, who appears to have acted as patron on behalf of the crown, caused intimation to be made to the moderator of the presbytery of Stirling, that a presentation had been given and accepted, and requested that the presbytery would take the presentee on trials for ordination. The parishioners opposed this summary mode of proceeding, and petitioned that a moderation might be granted for the people at large, without any reference to the presentation given. From the presbytery the matter was carried to the synod of Perth and Stirling, who found that the presentation was null and void, on account of its not having been presented to any judicatory in due time, by any person having a commission from his Majesty for that purpose; and it was finally agreed, among all the parties concerned, that, the presentation

being laid aside, a call should be moderated in the kirk of Denny. On the day of moderation, the former presentee was proposed on the part of the patron, and another candidate was proposed on the part of the people; and the roll of voters being called, few or none of the heads of families voted for the patron's candidate. Of the heritors, fifty-two gave him their support, and of these the greater part were either non-residenters, or not in the communion of the church; while for the popular candidate, there were seventy-four heritors, the whole of the session, and one hundred and thirty-eight heads of families. Though the voice of the parish was thus most unequivocally expressed against the presentee, and though the call given to the nominee of the people was, with the exception of the heritors mentioned, almost unanimous, yet the two ministers who conducted the moderation, refused to attest the call; they referred it to the presbytery; and the presbytery, without judging in it, referred it to the synod. The synod, after hearing all the parties, gave a decision, by a large majority, in favour of the parishioners, and ordered the presbytery to proceed with the settlement of the person whom they had called. Against this decision, the friends of the presentee protested, and carried the cause by appeal before the supreme court. The Assembly, either finding the business to be a troublesome one, or not having sufficient leisure to attend to it, remitted the settlement of it to their Commission. The Commission, always having on hand a superabundant supply of questions of this kind to occupy their attention, delayed the consideration of the Denny case till the next meeting of Assembly, during which time the people were obliged to exercise their patience. The Assembly at length gave the case a hearing; but instead of giving judgment, they again remitted it to the Commission. The Commission, after making several unsuccessful attempts to effect a reconciliation betwixt the parties, thought proper, at the close of one of their meetings, when the greater part of their members had gone away, and when there was scarcely a quorum of their number present, to reverse the sentence of the synod, and order the settlement of the presentee to take place.

Against this sentence, the people, of course, reclaimed, and once more appeared at the bar of the Assembly, complaining of the injustice that had been done them. Their complaint was disregarded. The sentence of the Commission was affirmed, and the presbytery of Stirling was enjoined to take the necessary steps for ordaining the intruder. Yet, with singular inconsistency, the same Assembly, on the following day, agreed to an act, in which they declared, as if in mockery of

their own proceedings, "that it is, and has been since the Reformation, the principle of this church, that no minister shall be intruded into any parish contrary to the will of the congregation."

The business, however, did not stop here. The presbytery, as well as the people, proved refractory; and, like conscientious men, they refused to execute a sentence which was opposed both to Scripture and to an avowed principle of their own church. This refusal, on the part of the presbytery, occasioned another complaint to be made to the Assembly by the presentee's friends. This venerable court, much more anxious to support their own dignity, than to do what they themselves had declared was "for the glory of God, and the edification of the body of Christ," were indignant that any inferior judicatory should presume to dispute their authority, even in a matter where conscience was concerned. They appointed a committee of twenty-one members to prepare an overture on this whole affair. At a subsequent sederunt, an overture, couched in strong language, was brought in, and approved of by a vote. It declared the dissatisfaction of the Assembly with the conduct of the presbytery, in neglecting or refusing to fulfil the appointment of the Assembly 1736; it enjoined the presbytery to proceed immediately with the trials of Mr. Stirling, and to have the whole finished before the 1st of September next, as they should be answerable to the next Assembly; and, lest the presbytery should still prove contumacious, the synod of Perth and Stirling were ordered to take him upon trials, and to proceed, so as to have the settlement completed before the 1st of March; and it was declared not to be lawful for them to put any question whether they would obey the appointment or not, but any ten or more of them might proceed to ordain Mr. Stirling, even though all the rest of their brethren should be opposed to the execution of the act. It was further provided by the overture, that "in case the synod, or such number of them as above-mentioned, shall not, before the 1st of November next, enter upon trials the said Mr. Stirling, or before the 1st of March next finish the same, the Assembly empower a special Commission of this General Assembly, to convene at Edinburgh, in the Old Kirk Aisle, on the third Wednesday of November or March respectively, with power to adjourn themselves as they shall think fit, in order to take trials, and ordain Mr. Stirling as minister of Denny."\*

Such was the overture which the venerable Assembly adopted for maintaining the authority of the supreme court, and

\* Acts of Assembly 1737.

with a view also to promote the peace and edification of the church. It is possible that the former of these objects might be gained by it; but how it could be accomplished, consistently with the latter, it is difficult to conceive. In the meantime, Mr. Stirling, the presentee, died before his trials for ordination could be completed; and the people of Denny, in contending anew for the exercise of their Christian privileges, were subjected to worse treatment than even that which they had already received. Upon an application made to the presbytery, a moderation was appointed to take place among them; one candidate was proposed on behalf of the few who had hitherto supported the claims of the patron, and another on behalf of the congregation; and when the votes were about to be taken, —such was the management of the day, by means of an advocate hired from Edinburgh for the purpose,—none of the elders were permitted to vote, on the ground that they were not qualified to the present civil government; the heads of families were denied the same privilege, inasmuch as it was alleged that they had no right to it, by the laws either of the church or of the state; and the votes also of heritors were refused, unless they were infested in their possessions, and unless they paid cess. Notwithstanding these arbitrary measures, a call to the popular candidate was subscribed by a large majority of the congregation, and presented to the presbytery, at their first meeting, by whom it was rejected, while the call of their opponents was sustained, and their candidate ordered to be taken on trials for ordination. Against this decision the people protested, but did not think proper to appeal to any higher court, as their past experience had taught them what treatment they might expect from the Assembly and their Commission.

The parishioners, however, were resolved that they would not tamely submit to the intruder. On the day set apart for the ordination, one hundred and seventeen heritors, elders, and heads of families, went publicly to the kirk of Denny, and after sermon, immediately before the imposition of hands, entered a solemn protest against the proceedings of the presbytery, declaring that the person whom they were now pretending to set apart to the office of the ministry, being intruded upon the parish contrary to the laws of Christ, was not, nor could be, regarded as lawful minister of the congregation, to whom they could submit in the Lord. Having made this declaration, and having taken instruments in the hand of a notary-public, they withdrew amid threats of being subjected to fine and imprisonment. Finding it impossible, consistently with a good conscience, to remain longer in a church where the feelings and privileges of the people were thus

trampled upon, they followed the example of many thousands of their countrymen, by renouncing the Establishment, and connecting themselves with the Secession, into the communion of which they were soon after this received.\*

In a preceding part of the narrative, mention has been made of the people of Muckhart parish being the first who petitioned the Associate Presbytery for a supply of sermon. The case of this people was still more hard than even that of Denny; and the particulars of it are worthy of being put on record, in a history of the Secession, as presenting us with another glaring instance of the total disregard of popular right and popular feeling, which characterized the ecclesiastical proceedings of the Establishment at that period. This case was before the Assembly a few years prior to the present date of my narrative; but I have purposely reserved the account of it, to be given along with that of Denny, as there is a considerable similarity betwixt the two, and as by being viewed in juxtaposition, they convey to the mind of the reader a more forcible impression of the deplorable condition, in a spiritual point of view, to which many of the parishes in Scotland were reduced by the tyrannical conduct of their ecclesiastical rulers.

The parish of Muckhart having become vacant by the removal of the Rev. Mr. Wardrop to Whitburn, Mr. Archibald Rennie received a presentation from the crown to the vacant charge; and a call was appointed by the presbytery to be moderated in the usual form. On the day of moderation, only two individuals residing within the parish, and a non-resident heritor, subscribed the call: all the rest of the parishioners united in opposing the settlement. The presbytery of Auchterarder hesitated to proceed with the ordination, in the face of such a formidable opposition. The business was, of course, carried from the presbytery to the synod, and from the synod to the Assembly, where, after a litigation of two years, the usual deliverance was given—that the settlement of the intruder should take place; and a committee of ministers

\* For the greater part of the particulars contained in this part of the narrative concerning Denny, I have been indebted to a curious historical account, drawn up, not many years after these transactions took place, by some of the individuals concerned in them. The paper now referred to, was subscribed in "the new kirk of Denny" (now Denny-Loanhead), by a number of the parishioners, some time after they had been formed into a congregation, in connexion with the Secession. It gives a minute account of their past "contentings" and "wrestlings," and was prepared with a view to its being presented to the Associate Synod at Edinburgh, in 1749, to enforce the claims of the subscribers in the case of a competing call. It is preserved by the session of Denny-Loanhead, as an interesting relic of "the olden time;" and to the Rev. Dr. Stark I hereby acknowledge my obligation, for having so politely favoured me with the use of it.

from the neighbouring presbyteries was appointed to co-operate along with the presbytery of Auchterarder, in carrying this decision into effect. On the day appointed for the ordination, a strong body of the parishioners waylaid their intended minister and the deputation that accompanied him, on the confines of the parish, and, without offering any personal violence, conducted them back to the village of Dollar, where they kept them in safe custody till the day was so far advanced, that the settlement could not take place; when they permitted them to depart. Another day was appointed for the ordination, when more effectual measures were adopted to carry it into effect. A band of soldiers guarded the ministers to the place of worship,\* and though the people were equally determined, as on the former occasion, to make opposition, they were overawed by the presence of the military, from proceeding to acts of violence. The church-door having been previously well secured, the ministers and those that accompanied them were obliged to make their entry by one of the windows; and there, in the presence of empty pews, did they go through the forms of an ordination,—not a single individual connected with the parish being present, except two heritors and an episcopalian non-resident. To finish the solemnities of the day, several of the parishioners were taken prisoners, and were ordered to be confined in Castle Campbell, an ancient seat of the Argyle family, in ruins; but, after a short while, they were permitted to return to their homes, on giving bail.

The Rev. Archibald Rennie, who was thus inducted into the pastoral charge of the parish of Muckhart, continued for upwards of half a century to possess the manse, to farm the glebe, and to pocket the stipend; and, during the whole of that long period, he never had either an elder or a kirk-session, never made a single collection for the poor, never dispensed the sacrament of the Lord's Supper, and never, it is said, except on one occasion, entered the pulpit. The Secession having commenced soon after his settlement, the great body of the people joined it, and the few parishioners who attended his ministry,—seldom amounting to more than seven,—assembled for worship, upon Sabbath, in the manse.†

\* The numerous contested settlements that took place at that period, rendered the attendance of a guard of soldiers frequently necessary at ordinations. On an occasion of this kind, where a party of English soldiers was on duty, one of them requesting instructions from the commanding officer, said he was afraid they should be obliged to fire. "Well," replied the officer, "if it must be so, the shortest way of settling the business, will be to make sure, in the first place, of the clergyman who occasions the disturbance."—*Christ. Rep.* vol. iv. p. 10.

† This statement concerning Muckhart is given on the authority of an individual well acquainted with the ecclesiastical history of that parish.

I have given somewhat minutely the particulars of the cases of Denny and Muckhart, for the purpose of showing how matters were managed in the Church of Scotland, at the time the Secession commenced. If these two cases had been insulated ones, they would scarcely have been worth mentioning, but they are to be regarded as affording a fair specimen of the treatment which not a few of the parishes received from the ecclesiastical courts, at that period. Any one who peruses the records of the General Assembly, will see how numerous were the instances of disputed settlements, that occupied the attention of that court, during the greater part of the eighteenth century. Some of the contests betwixt the patrons and the people were carried on for years, during which time the parishioners were kept in a constant tumult, and their spiritual interests in a great measure neglected; and, even after a struggle of years, how rarely did it happen that they succeeded in obtaining their object! It need excite no surprise, that the Secession, commencing in such circumstances, should have been hailed by a large portion of the people as a blessing; and that multitudes, shaking themselves free from the trammels of the Establishment, should have flocked with eagerness to her altars.

In consequence of the practice which prevailed to such a great extent within the national church, of imposing ministers upon congregations contrary to the wishes of the people, the Associate Presbytery, at their meeting in January 1737, agreed to the following overture, in which they condemn said practice, and declare that the only principle recognised by them, in the appointment of office-bearers in the church, is that of popular election. "Likewise, they acknowledge, assert, and declare, that ministers, and other office-bearers in the church, ought to be set over congregations by the call and consent of the majority of such in these congregations, who are admitted to full communion with the church in all her sealing ordinances, and that there should be no preference of voices in this matter, upon the account of secular consideration, according to Acts i. 16, to the close of the chapter, Acts vi. 2—6, &c. with many other scriptures, and according to our books of discipline, and acts of Assembly, agreeable thereto; and they reject and condemn all contrary principles, tenets, and practices, whereby the scripture rule and pattern in this important matter, is denied and rejected, and ministers are imposed upon dissenting and reclaiming congregations."\*

Numerous applications for sermon were made to the Presbytery from all parts of the country. During the years 1737—8

\* Minutes of Presbytery.

upwards of seventy petitions were laid upon their table,\* and some of them were from remote districts; they were almost all sent from what were termed "corresponding societies," or associations formed among the people for prayer and religious conference. The general purport of these petitions was, expressing the dissatisfaction of the petitioners with the abuses that prevailed in the national church; their acquiescence in the Testimony which had been published; their desire to be taken under the superintendence of the Presbytery; and a request that some of the brethren should come and hold a fast, and preach in those neighbourhoods where the petitioners resided, and also that the Presbytery should, as speedily as possible, license young men to preach the gospel, that thus the numerous stations which had joined the Secession might be supplied with gospel ordinances. Besides these applications that were made to them for sermon, the Presbytery received an accession of two new members; these were the Rev. Thomas Nairn of Abbotshall, who joined the Presbytery, October 12, 1737, and the Rev. James Thomson of Burntisland, who acceded June 7, 1738.

Notwithstanding the additional members which the Presbytery had received, it was impossible that they could answer one-half of the applications made to them, without being almost constantly absent from their own charges. The distances to which they had to travel were great; the places which they had to visit were numerous; and the demands of the people were urgent. They, therefore, resolved to license some young men who might take part with them in their laborious work. Previous to their taking this important step, they appointed a committee to consider what questions ought to be put to the young men, before they should be taken on trials for licence. This committee having given in their report, the following formula of questions was unanimously

\* It may gratify some of my readers, to present them with the following list of places, from whence petitions were sent to the Presbytery, during the first years of the Secession, by societies desirous to be received into its communion.

During the year 1737, petitions were received from Newbattle, East Lothian, West Linton and neighbouring parishes, Carlisle, Carstairs, Cumbeethan, Youllieside near Sanquhar, Morebattle, Balfon, Stitches, Larbert, Dunipace, Cumbernauld, Kilsyth, Slamanan, Falkirk, East Monkland, Teviotdale, Northumberland, Torryburn, Leslie, Fenwick, St. Andrews; and, during the year 1738, petitions were received from Gargunnoch, St. Ninians, Arngask, Greenock, Strathmiglo, Ross, societies in the bounds of Dunblane presbytery, Yarrow, Markinch, Annandale, Mearns, Monimail, Leven, Auchtermuchty, Pathhead, Fossoway, Kilmacoll, Dundee, Aberdour, Kilmaurs, Stow, Dunning, Falkland, Kettle, Logie, Fisherrow, Flisk, Alloa, Ayr, Nithsdale, Knockrife, Airth, Tippermuir, Rhind, Kinnoul, Aberdalgie, Kinglassie, Fettercairn, Dalreoch, Glasgow, Denny, Skirling, Bridge of Allan, Drip, Dalkeith, Kilwinning, Avondale, Muthil, and Monzie.—*Minutes of Presbytery.*

adopted; and it was further agreed that the answers given to the questions, by candidates for the ministry, should be recorded.

1. Do you believe the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments to be the word of God, and the only rule of faith and manners?

2. Do you believe the whole doctrine contained in the Westminster Confession of Faith, as received by the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland, in 1647, and in the Larger and Shorter Catechisms; and will you maintain and defend the same against all contrary errors, and particularly against the errors of Professor Simson and Campbell?

3. Do you believe that Christ has appointed a particular form of government in his church, and that this form of government is not prelatie or congregational, but presbyterial, consisting in a subordination of sessions to presbyteries, of presbyteries to synods, of synods to general assemblies; and will you maintain and defend the same, together with the purity of worship received and practised in this church, against all prelatie, erastian, and sectarian errors?

4. Do you own the binding obligation of the national covenant of Scotland, particularly as explained in 1638, to abjure prelacy, and the five articles of Perth; and of the solemn league of the three kingdoms, particularly as renewed in Scotland in 1648, with an acknowledgment of sins; and will you study to prosecute the ends thereof?

5. Do you approve of the Act and Testimony emitted by the Associate Presbytery, as a testimony for truth, and against defections therefrom in former and present times; and do you, in your judgment, condemn the several steps of defection condemned therein?

6. Do you promise, in the spirit of meekness, to be subject to the admonitions of your brethren in the Lord, and to the associate presbyteries, and to follow the peace of the church, together with your brethren, and to follow no divisive course from the Covenanted Church of Scotland; and that you will not give yourself up to detestable neutrality with respect thereto, whatever danger or suffering you may be exposed to on that account?

7. Are love to Christ, and a desire to be useful in edifying the souls of men, your chief motives in entering on the work of the holy ministry, and no worldly motive whatever?

The three following questions were afterwards added to the formula, with a view to their being put to ministers at their ordination:—

8. Have you used any undue methods for procuring the call from this congregation?

9. Do you engage to rule your own family well, and to live an exemplary life before the flock of Christ?

10. Do you accept of, and close with, the call from this Associate congregation, and engage to perform the duties of a faithful pastor among them, in preaching the gospel, not with the enticing words of men's wisdom, in catechizing, and in visiting the same from house to house?\*

Mr. John Hunter and Mr. Andrew Clarkson, two young men who had been for some time engaged in studying divinity under Mr. Wilson, were required to appear before the Presbytery in December 1737, that they might undergo examination, preparatory to their being admitted to trials for licence. A committee having been appointed to converse with them for this purpose, they were required to state first what were their views respecting the civil magistrate and the constituted authorities of the country. The Moderator, addressing them, said, "That as the sentiments and practice of the several members of the Presbytery anent the civil magistrate, particularly the present king, and other inferior magistrates under him, were very well known, they thought it needful, before they took the ordinary steps towards licensing young men, as probationers for the holy ministry, to know their sentiments anent the civil magistrate; in regard several through the land, who profess to adhere to our covenanted reformation, judge themselves obliged to disown the authority of the civil magistrate since the Revolution." Mr. Hunter, being called upon to state his sentiments on this point, declared, "That he did not approve of the act of parliament which imposed upon ministers of the gospel a form of prayer for the King and his family;—this he considered to be an erastian encroachment; but that he judged it to be his duty to pray for the King, and for all in authority, agreeably to the commandment of the Lord, by the apostle, 1 Tim. ii. 1—4; he considered it to be his duty, also, to submit and be subject to the authority of the present magistrates, supreme and subordinate, because of the Lord's commandment, *Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man, for the Lord's sake.* The present king," he said, "had *jus humanum* to rule and govern, which should be avowed so long as he did not tyrannically persecute and oppress his subjects." And he further added, "that he had no difficulty about praying for the king *nominatim*, having Scripture example for it in the people praying, *Bless King David.*"

Mr. Clarkson stated, that his sentiments on these points were much the same as those which had now been expressed. They were then examined as to their knowledge in divinity, and

\* Brown's MS.

their acquaintance with the controversies of the day; and lastly, with regard to their personal experience of the power of religion: and the Presbytery being satisfied with them in all these particulars, the questions of the above formula were proposed to them, after which they were admitted to trials for licence.\*

Mr. Clarkson having formerly belonged to the followers of Mr. M'Millan, or Societymen, a charge was brought against him, soon after this, by certain individuals, that notwithstanding the declaration which he had made to the Presbytery, his sentiments respecting the allegiance which he owed to the civil government were the same as those which he held before he joined the Secession. The Presbytery appointed an inquiry to be made into this charge. Both Mr. Clarkson and his accusers were required to appear before them. The latter did not appear to substantiate their charge, and the former was required to state explicitly, in writing, what were his sentiments on the point referred to. With Mr. Clarkson's statement the Presbytery were not altogether satisfied, and they agreed that they would not proceed any further with his trials at present. At a future period, however, he was permitted to resume them, in consequence of his making a renunciation of the obnoxious sentiments which he had held respecting the civil magistrate.† Mr. Hunter, the other student, after having finished his trials, to the satisfaction of the Presbytery, became the first licentiate of the Secession Church, and appears to have been both an acceptable and a useful preacher.

The popularity of the Seceding ministers, and the numerous adherents which they were gaining to their cause, in every

\* The present practice of presbyteries in the Secession, in proposing the questions of the formula to young men, at the time of their receiving licence, differs somewhat from the practice of the Fathers of the Secession. They proposed the formula to the young men *before* admitting them to trials for licence. *Now*, the practice universally followed is, to propose the questions of the formula, after all the trials are completed. Would it not be better to revert to the old practice, and to propose the questions to candidates for the ministry, before admitting them to trials? Because, on the supposition that they are not willing to assent to the formula, it must surely be better to know this before the trial discourses have been received, than after, inasmuch as a good deal of unnecessary trouble would thereby be saved both to the young men, and also to the Presbytery.

† The anxiety of the Presbytery to ascertain that the persons whom they licensed to preach the gospel, entertained proper views of the allegiance which they owed to their king, and to all who were invested with authority over them, shows how unfounded was the slander which their enemies attempted to raise against them, when they endeavoured to hold them up as objects of jealousy to the civil rulers, by representing them as disaffected to the government of their country. Nothing could be more wicked than such an attempt; for, if these good men had any fault at all on this point, it appears rather to have inclined to an opposite extreme. Their conduct, both in public and in private, so far from furnishing any ground for the charge of disloyalty, seems rather to have been tinged with what, according to the vocabulary of the present day, would have been called *ultra loyalty*.

part of the country, excited both jealousy and alarm on the part of the ecclesiastical rulers in the Establishment; and it was resolved, that, if they did not renounce their "disorderly practices," in preaching the gospel to their fellow-sinners, wher ever an opportunity of doing so was presented to them, stronger measures would be adopted to silence them. Accordingly, when the General Assembly met in May, 1738, in consequence of a representation sent up from the synod of Perth and Stirling, and instructions from the synod of Fife, respecting the conduct of the Seceding brethren, it was agreed that this subject should be fully considered in a committee of the whole house. The result of this deliberation was, that the Assembly found that these brethren had seceded from the church without any justifiable grounds, and continued in a state of secession, notwithstanding the clemency shown them in 1734; that they had erected themselves into a presbytery, and exercised a judicial presbyterial power, not only over their own congregations, but over the whole church; that they had "framed and published to the world a printed paper, called their *Act, Declaration, and Testimony*," and had emitted, besides, other papers of an improper kind; that they had not confined their ministerial labours to their own congregations, but had dispensed religious ordinances to persons of other congregations without the knowledge and consent of the ministers to which they belonged; that, with the view of promoting their "dangerous schism," they received at their presbyterial meetings all persons who chose to accede to them from other congregations, and for the same purpose appointed fasts to be held in different parts of the country, "at which several thousands of persons of both sexes resorted;" and, finally, that they had appointed one of their number to teach divinity, and had taken some persons under probationary trials for the ministry.

On all these grounds, the Assembly did "unanimously resolve, declare, and enact, That although, upon these and other such accounts, this church might now proceed, in the due exercise of discipline, to appoint these seceding and separating brethren, and their followers, to be proceeded against and censured according to the demerit of their faults; yet this Assembly, choosing rather still to treat them in the spirit of meekness, brotherly love, and forbearance, did, and hereby do, enjoin all the ministers of this national church, as they shall have access, and especially the ministers of the synods and presbyteries within which these seceding brethren reside, to be at all pains, by conference and other gentle means of persuasion, to reclaim and reduce them to their duty, and the communion of this church; and all presbyteries and synods to report their diligence and success, and what they can learn or observe concern-

ing the future behaviour of these brethren, to the Commission to be appointed by the Assembly, at any of the diets thereof; which Commission is hereby authorized and appointed to take such reports or representations, with those already made to this Assembly, under their consideration, and if they shall see cause, to take all proper steps and methods for duly sisting the separating brethren above named, before the next Assembly, to answer for their irregular conduct, and all the parts thereof. And the said Commission is also empowered to do what they shall think proper, to prepare and ripen the case for the decision of that Assembly."

In addition to the above, the General Assembly earnestly recommended it to all the ministers, elders, and members of the church, to endeavour, in their respective stations, and by all proper means, to reclaim "these poor deluded people," who had been carried away by this division, and to prevent the increase of a schism, "so dangerous to the peace of this church, so contrary to the spirit of the gospel, so very hurtful to religion and serious godliness, to Christian charity and brotherly love."\*

The efforts that were made, in compliance with these admonitions of the supreme court, "to reduce to their duty" the Seceding ministers, and to reclaim "the poor deluded people," who had been carried away by them, proved unsuccessful: And the Assembly's Commission, at their meeting in November, resolved that a libel should be drawn up, and served on each of the brethren. The Presbytery having received intelligence of what was intended, made preparations for the approaching storm. They appointed a general fast to be held, by all the praying societies connected with them, "on account of the designs of the Established Church against the brethren, and the testimony in their hand." In the month of March, 1739, each of the members of the Presbytery had a copy of the libel served upon him; and they were all summoned to appear at the bar of the ensuing General Assembly, to answer for their conduct. The libel charged them with making an unwarrantable Secession from the church; with forming themselves into a presbytery, and exercising judicial presbyterial power; with emitting an Act, Declaration, and Testimony, condemning the church and the judicatories thereof; with leaving their own parishes, and dispensing ordinances to persons of other congregations; with ordaining elders in other parishes than their own; with appointing fasts in different parts of the country; with taking several persons under probationary trials, and licensing one or more of them to

\* Acts of Assembly 1738.

preach the gospel ; and with particular acts of offence under these general heads.

This libel the Presbytery published, with answers to all the particular charges which it contained ; and at a meeting, held at Culfargie on the 13th of April, it was agreed that they would appear at the bar of the Assembly, and give in a formal declination of the authority of that court. Messrs. Wilson, Moncrieff, and Fisher were appointed to prepare a draught of the declination, which they were to have in readiness to submit to the next meeting. When the Presbytery met at Edinburgh, in the following month, this draught was laid upon the table in the form of an act "finding and declaring that the present judicatories of the national church are not lawful nor right constituted courts of Christ, and declining all power, authority, and jurisdiction that the said judicatories may claim to themselves over the said Presbytery, or any of the members thereof, or over any that are under their inspection." After long and serious deliberation, and after solemn prayer to God, this act was unanimously adopted by the Presbytery ; and, at the same time, they resolved that when they should be called upon by the Assembly's officer to appear before that court, they would go in a constituted capacity, with their Moderator at their head ; that he should read this declination in the presence of the Assembly, and if he should be interrupted in the reading of it, he was either to put it into the hands of the Moderator of the Assembly, or leave it on the table, when the whole should retire.

In the Act of Declination, the Presbytery state, that it is with deep regret that they find themselves obliged in duty to take such a step ; that it would have afforded them great satisfaction if they had not had such weighty grounds and reasons for declining all authority and jurisdiction on the part of the judicatories of the national church ; but that they find themselves imperiously called upon, by the peculiar circumstances in which they are placed, publicly to declare that said judicatories are not lawful nor rightly constituted courts of Christ. This declaration they make on the following grounds : — First, these judicatories not only receive into their number, but continue to support intruders, and such as are known to be guilty of such scandalous practices as render them obnoxious to the censures of the church, and who, therefore, have no warrant from the Head of the Church to sit in his courts. Secondly, they have been active in carrying on a course of defection and backsliding from the Lord, by tolerating the erroneous, by supporting and countenancing error, and by enacting laws and constitutions contrary to the laws of the King of Zion, whereby ministerial freedom is suppressed, and

new and unwarrantable terms of ministerial and Christian communion are imposed, and whereby the heritage of God is oppressed and broken. Thirdly, though the office-bearers of the house of God, in all their spiritual functions and administrations, ought to walk only by the laws and statutes of the Lord Jesus Christ, and though their ecclesiastical courts are held in his name, who is King in Zion, and are subordinate to him alone, yet the present judicatories of the national church have subordinated themselves to the civil powers, in their ecclesiastical functions and administrations, and, therefore, they ought not to be recognised as free and lawful courts of Christ. These grounds of declinature the Presbytery illustrate at considerable length; and they declare, "that any act, sentence, or deed, that may be done, or passed against all, or any one of them, by any of the present judicatories, whereby their ministerial office, or the exercise thereof, or their pastoral office to their respective congregations, may be affected or prejudged, shall be held and reputed as null and void in itself; and that it shall be lawful and warrantable for them, notwithstanding of any such act, sentence, or deed, to exercise their ministry, in as full and ample a manner as hitherto they have done; and as if no such act, sentence, or deed had been done or passed against them." And they conclude by stating, "As for this Presbytery, whatever the conduct of the judicatories toward them may be; and however they may be borne down, reproached, and despised, they are persuaded the cause is the Lord's; and however weak and unworthy they are whom he has singled out in his adorable providence to put hand to a testimony for him; and whatever he may see meet to do with them, they desire to rest in faith and hope that the Lord will build up his Jerusalem in Scotland, and gather his dispersed Israel into one."

On the 10th of May, the General Assembly met. After the preliminary business had been gone through, Mr. James Ramsay of Kelso, the last Moderator, moved that they should take under their consideration the act of the preceding Assembly with regard to the ministers who had seceded, and the proceedings of the Commission in reference to said act: It was agreed that this affair, and all the papers connected with it, should be considered in a committee of the whole house. The report of the committee, at next meeting, was, "That they had met, and deliberated upon the case of the Seceding ministers, but had no particular opinion to offer." They were then appointed to meet, on the following day, for farther consideration of the matter. On the 16th, they reported it to be their opinion, "That this General Assembly should proceed upon the libel transmitted from the Commission of

the late General Assembly against the Seceding ministers." This report was approved of, and the Assembly resolved to proceed accordingly. From this resolution, Mr. John Willison of Dundee dissented, and to his dissent four ministers and two elders adhered; their reasons of dissent were ordered to lie *in retentis*. On the 17th, the Seceding Brethren, being called by the officer, appeared at the bar of the Assembly in a constituted capacity, with Mr. Thomas Mair at their head as Moderator. After the bustle, occasioned by their entry, had subsided, the Moderator of the Assembly addressed them in soothing language, and said, "That though they were called here to answer to a libel, the Assembly were very loath to be obliged to proceed upon it; and that if the said defenders would now show a disposition to return to the duty and obedience they owe to this church, the Assembly was ready to forgive all that was past, and to receive them with open arms." Mr. Mair replied, on behalf of the Presbytery, that they appeared there as a court constituted in the name of Christ; and was about to read the Act of Declinature, when he was interrupted by the Moderator of the Assembly, who caused the libel first to be read, after which Mr. Mair was permitted to proceed with the reading of the act. Having finished the reading of it, he delivered it into the hands of the Moderator of the Assembly; and all the brethren having signified their adherence to it, they withdrew from the court to their own place of meeting.

The Assembly, without paying any regard to the Declinature, appointed a committee "to consider the process as it now stands, and to prepare an overture as to the Assembly's farther procedure therein." On the following day, the Seceding ministers were again called, but did not appear. The committee then presented their report, and the draught of an overture which they had prepared, when a long discussion took place. Some were for proceeding to the deposition of the refractory ministers instantly; others were for delay. A division took place upon the question, "Whether they should proceed at present to pass a final sentence or not?" when it carried in the negative. The Assembly next day resumed the consideration of this business; and the committee's overture, after some amendments, was unanimously adopted.

This overture, after commenting in strong terms upon the appearance which the Seceding brethren made at the bar of the Assembly, and upon "the unparalleled boldness" which they had displayed in presuming to decline the authority of the highest judicatory of the church, found the libel relevant to infer deposition; found "the same also proven in its

most material articles, by the said paper produced by them as aforesaid." It then proceeds in the following strain:—"But in respect, that in this Assembly, before they proceeded to call said defenders, an inclination had been expressed by several members not to proceed to a final sentence against them at this time, but to forbear the same yet another year, in order to give them a further time to return to their duty, and to render them still more inexcusable if they should persist in their unwarrantable separation; and though, from their behaviour at their appearance, and the paper given in by them, there is little hope left of their being reclaimed to their duty, but they seem determined to continue in their most unwarrantable and schismatical courses, and so far as in them lies, to ruin and destroy the interests of religion in this church,—this Assembly have thought fit to forbear inflicting the just censure upon them at this time, and to refer the same to the next General Assembly, to which this Assembly do earnestly recommend to inflict the censure of deposition, without further delay, upon such of the said defenders as shall not betwixt and that time, either in presence of the Commission to be named by this Assembly, or of the ensuing General Assembly, retract the said pretended Act and Declinature, and return to their duty and submission to this church. And the Assembly farther recommend to all the members of this Assembly, and particularly such of them as shall be members of the next Assembly, there to urge and insist for their compliance with this recommendation, which this Assembly cannot allow themselves to doubt will be granted, as it will then be absolutely necessary for the interests and credit of this church, that the foresaid censure be pronounced and inflicted against such of the said defenders as shall then be persisting in their separation. And in respect the said defenders have not appeared, though called this diet, the Assembly order their Commission to cause cite them again to appear before the next Assembly, to abide the judgment thereof, upon the said libel, and the said paper given in by the defenders, instead of an answer to which Assembly the said libel and process is hereby continued and referred as above; and as to one of the defenders, Mr. James Thomson, minister at Burntisland, who was not contained in the act of the last Assembly, the General Assembly, without determining on the objection offered by his parish in the citation of him, did agree and resolve, that their Commission do cite him, *de novo* to answer to the next Assembly for the matters contained in the said libel and paper, given in by him and the other defenders. And to the end, the like schismatical and divisive

courses, which have so much disturbed the peace and quiet of the church and of the country, and are so very contrary to serious religion and godliness, may be for hereafter effectually discouraged and prevented, the General Assembly ordains all presbyteries and synods strictly to observe the sixth act of the Assembly 1708, intituled, *Act for suppressing schisms and disorders in the church*, by which 'it is strictly enjoined, and peremptorily appointed, that all the presbyteries and synods take particular notice of all their members, preachers, or others, under their inspection; and if they find any ministers or others to fall into irregularities of schismatical courses, that they duly call them to an account, and censure them according to the merits of their fault, even to deposition of ministers and elders, and to apply to the Commission for their advice, as they shall see cause.' And without derogating from the generality thereof, the Assembly ordains all presbyteries, to whom any ministers shall presume to give in a secession or separation from this church, forthwith to give notice thereof to the Moderator of the Commission of the Assembly for the time, and to instruct the members of their presbytery, who shall be members of such Commission, to ask the opinion and direction of that Commission, at their first diet, after offering such secessions; to the end, that if such presbyteries cannot, in the mean time, prevail with the brethren who shall so presume to secede, to retract their secession, such brethren may be forthwith proceeded against, according to the above act of Assembly; and what opinions and directions of the Commission for the time, as presbyteries shall receive agreeably thereto, these presbyteries are hereby strictly enjoined to follow the same. And in case any presbytery, to whom such secession or separation shall be given in, shall fail in their duty in the premises, the Assembly ordains the synods within whose bounds they may lie, without delay, to do therein as they shall think fit, agreeable to said act of Assembly. And in case such synod shall fail in their duty, the Assembly ordains the Commission to be appointed by this Assembly, to take such matters into their own cognizance; and in all such cases, the presbyteries, synods, or Commission to be appointed by this Assembly respectively, if they cannot quickly reclaim such seceding brethren, are hereby ordained to proceed against them, by way of libel, to the sentence of deposition. And the Assembly appoints, that a short state of the proceedings of the judicatories of this church, with relation to the foresaid ministers, setting forth the gentle methods used for reclaiming them, and their undutiful behaviour to this church, be drawn up by a committee to be named for that effect, and printed, and

copies thereof to be transmitted to each presbytery ; and that all the ministers of this church shall be careful to exhort the people, both publicly and privately, to guard against divisive courses, and *to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace*, as they would consult the true interests of serious religion, and the quiet of their country.”\*

Such was the overture which the Assembly adopted,—an overture in which there is a great profession of kindness and of leniency towards the misguided Seceders, but which, in reality, breathes a spirit of the keenest hostility. The truth is, that the leaders of this Assembly were anxious to proceed forthwith to the deposition of the Seceding ministers ; and their delaying to do so did not proceed from any kindly feeling which they cherished toward the brethren, nor from any particular desire which they had to see them restored to the communion of the church. But they were guided by motives of policy. They did not wish to give offence to that party in the Assembly who were well-affected toward the Seceders, and who pled on their behalf for a still farther delay. This Assembly, which professed such a regard for the maintenance of the discipline of the church, and which left on record such a strong recommendation to their successors to depose from the office of the ministry men of acknowledged worth and piety, gave a proof that they were influenced in this business more by personal feeling than by even-handed justice, inasmuch as they passed an act, restoring to the sacred office a person whose principles they declared to be inconsistent with the principles of their church. This person was Mr. John Glass of Tealing, against whom the Commission of 1730 had pronounced a sentence of deposition, on account of his having adopted Independent principles. The conduct which he had pursued since that time, had been at least equally sectarian with that of the Seceders ; the principles which he still continued to hold, were more at variance with those of the Church of Scotland, than were the principles of the Seceding brethren ; and, notwithstanding all this, him they restored, in the plenitude of their power, to the “character of a minister of the gospel of Christ,” while the brethren were denounced as altogether unworthy of the sacred office. It may be proper, however, to add, that though the Assembly re-invested Mr. Glass with the character of a minister, of which they had formerly deprived him, they at the same time declared him incapable of being called or settled in any congregation in connexion with the Established Church of Scotland, until he should renounce his peculiar principles.

\* Acts of Assembly 1739.

The process against the Seceding ministers was brought to a final termination, by the Assembly which met in May 1740. The brethren being thrice publicly called at the doors of the Assembly-house, and none of them appearing, nor any person for them, the libel was again read over *pro forma* on the 12th, and on the 15th sentence of deposition was pronounced against them in the following terms:—

“ The General Assembly, pursuant to their resolution of the 12th instant, resumed the consideration of the process against the eight Seceding ministers, and having caused them to be again called, and none of them compearing, nor any person for them, the Assembly caused to be read the minute of their proceeding in this affair on Monday last, and also that of the last Assembly of May 19, 1739, and then proceeded to consider, whether, upon the libel found relevant to infer deposition, and proven as to its most material articles by the last General Assembly, against the whole ministers therein named, and again found relevant and proven by this Assembly, in so far as concerns Mr. James Thomson, upon the new libel executed against him, in pursuance of the said act of the last Assembly, this Assembly should proceed to inflict the said sentence of deposition; and after full reasoning upon the expediency thereof, and prayer to God for direction how to judge in this weighty affair, and for his blessing on such decision as the Assembly should come to, it was agreed to put the question, *Depose or Not?* And rolls being called, and votes marked, it carried by a very great majority, *Depose*. And, therefore, the General Assembly, in respect of the articles found relevant and proven against the persons therein and hereafter named by the last and this Assembly, as aforesaid, *DID*, and hereby *DO*, in the name of the LORD JESUS CHRIST, the sole King and Head of the church, and by virtue of the power and authority committed by Him to them, actually *DEPOSE* Messrs. Ebenezer Erskine at Stirling, William Wilson at Perth, Alexander Moncrieff at Abernethy, James Fisher at Kinclaven, Ralph Erskine at Dunfermline, Thomas Mair at Orwell, Thomas Nairn at Abbotshall, and James Thomson at Burntisland, ministers, from the office of the holy ministry, prohibiting and discharging them, and every one of them, to exercise the same, or any part thereof, within this church in all time coming; and the Assembly *DID*, and hereby *DO* *DECLARE* all the parishes or charges of the persons above named, vacant, from and after the day and date of this sentence, and ordains copies hereof to be sent to the several presbyteries of Stirling, Perth, Dunkeld, Dunfermline, and Kirkaldy; and the said respective presbyteries are hereby ordered to send copies hereof, to the kirk sessions of Perth

and Dunfermline, and session clerks of the other respective parishes hereby declared vacant, to be communicated to the elders. And the Assembly appoints that letters be wrote by their Moderator to the magistrates of the respective burghs concerned, with copies of this sentence; and the Assembly recommends to the presbyteries within whose bounds the parishes or charges declared vacant do lie, to be careful in using their best endeavours for supplying the same during the vacancy, and for promoting the speedy and comfortable settlement thereof.”\*

Fifteen ministers and four ruling elders dissented from this sentence; and, at a subsequent meeting, the Assembly empowered their Commission to decide in any process that might come before them from any presbytery or synod, with a view to the speedy settlement of the parishes thus declared vacant.

It will be difficult to find in the records of any ecclesiastical court a sentence more unjust and tyrannical, than that which the Assembly at this time pronounced against the Fathers of the Secession. The reader will naturally ask, for what was it, that these good men were deposed from the office of the holy ministry? Was it because they were chargeable with error in doctrine? Was it because they were immoral in practice? Was it because they held principles at variance with the constitution of the Church of Scotland? No; they were eminently distinguished for their soundness in the faith, for the purity of their lives, and for their warm attachment to the constitution of that church from which they were expelled. In these respects, even their worst enemies could not affix the slightest stain upon their character. The people revered them for their piety, and by not a few of their brethren in the ministry were they held in high esteem, as good and conscientious men. Why, then, were they subjected to the highest ecclesiastical censure that can be inflicted on a minister of the gospel? The simple answer to this question is, that they were deposed because they had formed themselves into a presbytery, for the purpose of giving to their countrymen a pure dispensation of gospel ordinances, unfettered by the laws of patronage, and other acts of parliament. They were deposed because they refused any longer to co-operate with the established judicatories, in carrying on that system of ecclesiastical tyranny, which had been pursued by them for such a number of years. They had complained, petitioned, and remonstrated; but all to no purpose. Their remonstrances, as well as the complaints of the people, were disregarded, and the only course left them to pursue, consistently

\* Acts of Assembly 1740.

with a good conscience, was to withdraw from the communion of a church, which, if it did not openly tolerate, at least winked at error, and which, by the decisions of its courts, had sanctioned, for a series of years, the most oppressive measures. And because they would not return to the communion of this church when invited, but preferred acting by themselves, as a separate presbytery, they were forsooth deposed, as being no longer worthy of the office of the ministry! That this was the head and front of their offending is obvious from the language which the Moderator addressed to them, when they appeared at the bar of the Assembly in 1739; they were then told, that if they "would return to the obedience which they owed to the church;" in other words, if they would cease to make any farther opposition to the course of mal-administration which the church was pursuing, all their past conduct would be forgotten, the libel would be thrown aside, and they "would be received with open arms." To allow them time to consider whether they would refuse or accept of this kind invitation, a year of respite was granted them. The Seceders preferring to make a sacrifice of their worldly interests, rather than a compromise of duty, continued firm to their purpose; and the year of grace having expired, they were, in 1740, deposed accordingly. What an idea are we to form, from this transaction, of the morality and justice of the General Assemblies of the Church of Scotland at that period! The sentence of deposition which, in the frenzy of party-spirit, they pronounced against the founders of the Secession, men of acknowledged worth and piety, and the grounds upon which this sentence was pronounced by them, will stand to future generations as a blot upon their annals, which no sophistry will ever be able to wipe out.

Whether the Seceding ministers might have kept possession both of their churches and their stipends, notwithstanding the sentence of deposition pronounced against them by the Assembly, is a question which some have been inclined to answer in the affirmative; and this opinion they rest upon an act, passed in the reign of Queen Anne, which prohibits magistrates from giving effect to any sentence pronounced by an ecclesiastical court.\* Whether this be a just interpretation of the act referred to or not, I shall not take upon me to determine. At all events, the Seceding ministers showed no disposition to have the validity of this opinion ascertained by an appeal to the courts of law. They knew that they were secure in the possession of their flocks. From the hearts and affections of their devoted people no sentence of deposition

\* Struthers' History of Scotland, Vol. II. p. 2.

could drive them; and while they felt themselves securely intrenched in these strongholds, they renounced, without a struggle, the places of worship and the stipends which the law had provided for them. It is but justice, however, to the civil authorities connected with the districts to which the deposed ministers belonged, to state that, with two exceptions, no immediate attempt was made to exclude them by force from their usual places of worship. Mr. Ralph Erskine at Dunfermline, and Mr. Thomson at Burntisland, continued to occupy their pulpits for at least two years after sentence of deposition was pronounced against them. The conduct of the magistrates in permitting them to do so, was made a subject of complaint to the Assembly which met in 1742; and the Moderator was appointed to write to the magistrates of these burghs, "exhorting them to give no longer countenance to such disorders, but to perform their duty, by debarring the deposed persons from access to officiate in the parish churches."\* No attempt was made to exclude by violence Mr. Moncrieff of Abernethy from his church; but, with a becoming dignity of character, he refused to enter it, and preferred preaching, even during winter, in the open air. Mr. Nairn of Abbotshall was permitted quietly to occupy his church till the month of October, when the heritors, of their own accord, locked the doors of the church, and of the churchyard, and nailed plates of iron upon the key-holes, to prevent either minister or people from getting access.†

If we may judge from what took place, the strongest ebullition of party feeling, on the part of the magistrates toward the Seceding brethren, was manifested at Stirling and Perth. At both of these towns, the venerable men of God, along with their congregations, were forcibly excluded from their usual places of worship the very first Sabbath after sentence of deposition had been pronounced by the Assembly. At Stirling, the magistrates prohibited the ringing of the church-bells to convene the people to worship; and Mr. Erskine, having gone up at the usual hour, found the church doors locked, and the congregation assembled around the sanctuary. Some proposed, in the heat of their indignation, that a forcible entry should be made, by breaking open the doors. This, however, Mr. Erskine would not permit; but lifting up the pulpit Bible, which it was customary for him to carry to church, he protested, in a solemn manner, that he was pursuing the path of duty, and that not he, but his opposers were answerable for the events of that day. He then withdrew, attended by his congregation, to a convenient place in the neighbourhood, where

\* Unprinted Acts of Assembly, 1742.

† Continuation of Wilson's Defence, p. 91.

the services of the day were conducted in the open air. The spot selected for this purpose, was a green eminence on the north side of the town, immediately beneath the frowning battlements of the castle, commanding a view of the Grampians in the distance, and looking down upon the smiling plains of the Forth. Imagination can scarcely conceive a finer scene than a congregation of worshippers assembled on such an occasion, and in such a spot. Mr. Erskine commenced the services of the day by giving out the first portion of the sixtieth Psalm. The verses selected by him were peculiarly appropriate to the circumstances in which the congregation were placed :—

“ O Lord, thou hast rejected us,  
 And scattered us abroad ;  
 Thou justly hast displeased been ;  
 Return to us, O God.  
 The earth to tremble thou hast made ;  
 Therein didst breaches make :  
 Do thou thereof the breaches heal,  
 Because the land doth shake,” &c. &c.

After a solemn prayer offered up to God, he read out for his text, Matt. viii. 27, ‘ But the men marvelled, saying. What manner of man is this, that even the winds and the sea obey him !’ Many have been heard to speak of the occurrences of that day with mingled emotions of vexation and delight,—vexation at the unjust treatment which their minister received, in being driven from his church ; and delight at the recollection of the solemn truths which, on that occasion, were uttered by him with more than his ordinary earnestness.

The sentence of deposition was carried into effect against Mr. Wilson at Perth, in a manner equally summary and rigorous. On the Sabbath morning, the magistrates received the Moderator’s letter, informing them of the sentence which the Assembly had pronounced ; and they took immediate measures for giving it effect. When Mr. Wilson, accompanied by a friend, went to the house of God at the usual hour, he found an immense concourse of people assembled in the streets, and the magistrates, with their guards, drawn up in front of the building, prepared to oppose his entrance. The following account, given by his biographer, of what took place at this memorable crisis, is so graphically sketched, and so interesting in itself, that I consider no apology necessary for extracting it at full length. It will give my readers a vivid idea of the spirit which animated the Fathers of the Secession :—

“ Mr. Wilson, undaunted, advanced to the main entrance, and addressing those authorities who guarded it, demanded admission by an authority higher than theirs. ‘ In the name

of my Divine Master,' said the venerable pastor, 'I demand admission into his temple.' The demand was thrice made in the same manner, and thrice met with a determined and stern refusal. On this there was a simultaneous stir in the crowd; and those who had seen or heard the repeated demands and refusals of entrance, became indignant and impatient, and were about to stone the civil authorities of the city, and to force an entrance for the ministers they loved. But, perceiving their designs, Mr. Wilson, with affectionate and commanding dignity, turned to the crowd, and firmly forbade the execution of their purpose. 'No violence,' said he, 'my friends; the Master whom I serve is the *Prince of Peace*.'

"Mr. Ferrier,\* in the mean time, having endeavoured in vain to procure admission for his minister, solemnly protested against the conduct of the magistrates; and, on remarking that they could justify themselves neither before God nor men for their proceedings that day, was told, in reply, 'they would take men in their own hands, and would answer to God when they were called.'

"At this interesting juncture, the deacon of the glovers' corporation stepped forward, and said to Mr. Wilson, that if he would accept of the glovers' yard for the services of the day, he was most welcome to it. The kind and seasonable offer was most readily and thankfully accepted. Thither he immediately retired, followed by an immense concourse of people. An erection was soon obtained, where he might conveniently conduct the public worship of God.

"In the mean time, 'Mr. John Hally, then a probationer, employed by Mr. David Black to preach that day, being attended by the said Mr. Black, was, with the assistance of the magistrates, thrust into the pulpit.'

"During these procedures, Mr. Wilson was quite composed. The trying scene had not unfitted him for the discharge of those duties in which he delighted; and his sphere of usefulness was, by these events, much extended. Many more than the church could have contained, flocked to hear him. A considerable proportion of those were doubtless prompted by curiosity alone; but by far the greater number were deeply interested in the occurrences of the times, and were determined to adhere to their godly minister.

"There was something highly appropriate, and peculiarly expressive of the feelings of this excellent Father of the Secession, in the psalm with which he commenced, in the open air, the public solemnities of the Sabbath:—

\* Mr. Ferrier was the friend who accompanied Mr. Wilson on this occasion. He was a writer in Perth, and a gentleman of high respectability.

“He was no foe that me reproached,  
 Then that endure I could;  
 Nor hater that did 'gainst me boast,  
 From him me hide I would.  
 But thou, man, whom mine equal, guide,  
 And mine acquaintance wast:  
 We joined sweet counsels, to God's house  
 In company we pass'd.”—Ps. lv. 12—14.

“The prayer, we doubt not, accorded with the peculiar circumstances in which he and his fellow-worshippers were placed, breathing the devout feelings of his heart, showing how resigned he was to the disposing will of the God of providence, and how anxious he was that the events of the day in particular, and of the times in general, might be rendered subservient to the divine glory, and to the prosperity of the church.

“When he opened the sacred volume, the text he read produced a thrill in every heart, and especially among the more thoughtful part of the audience: ‘*Let us go forth, therefore, unto Him, without the camp, bearing his reproach.*’

“The devotional exercises of this eventful Sabbath were throughout solemn and interesting, and much calculated to make a deep and lasting impression on those who witnessed them. When the work of the day was over, Mr. Wilson, on returning home, went directly to his study, tired and worn out with his anxieties and exertions. Isabella, his eldest daughter, then but twelve years of age, but who, attended by one of the servants, had witnessed the whole extraordinary scene,—a scene which she distinctly remembered as long as she lived, and often mentioned to her family with the deepest interest, felt very curious to understand from her father the meaning of what had taken place, but not liking to ask him, she hung about the door of his apartment till he observed her, and perceived what were her feelings and wishes. He then called her, and said, ‘Bell, this has been a day of trial, but we have reason to be thankful that it has not been a day of shame. If any one ask you, Bell, why your father lost his kirk, you may just say, as good Mr. Guthrie, before his death, directed my mother to say of him, if she was asked why he lost his head,—that it was in a good cause.’”\*

\* Ferrier's Memoirs of the Rev. W. Wilson, pp. 339—343.

## CHAPTER IV.

The breach between the Secession and the Establishment rendered irreparable—Riotous opposition made to the Secession—Seceding tenants persecuted by their landlords—Pamphlets written against the Secession—Mr. Wilson of Perth writes a "Defence"—Anecdote—Mr. Gavin Beugo and Mr. James Mair, probationers, join the Associate Presbytery—Paper of accession by Mr. Beugo—Ordination of Mr. John Hunter—His death—Anecdote of Principal Robertson—Reply of a Seceder to a member of the Establishment—Licentiates of the Presbytery—Recommendation by the Presbytery to their adherents—Act passed by the Presbytery concerning public fasts—Difference of opinion among the members on this subject—Appearance of Mr. George Whitefield—His great labours—His popularity—Invited by the Seceders to come to Scotland—Their object in giving the invitation—Correspondence between Mr. Whitefield and the Messrs. Erskine—Mr. Whitefield arrives at Leith—Preaches in Mr. R. Erskine's pulpit in Dunfermline—His conference with the Associate Presbytery—Unsatisfactory issue of the conference—Remarks upon the conference—Unhappy Results—Death of the Rev. Mr. Wilson—His character—Mr. Moncrieff appointed Professor of Divinity—Mr. Whitefield's second visit to Scotland—Extraordinary work at Cambuslang—Controversy concerning it—A fast appointed on account of it, by the Associate Presbytery—The Presbytery's conduct condemned—Opinion concerning the "Cambuslang work."

THE pronouncing of the sentence of deposition against the eight brethren, made the separation betwixt the Secession and the Establishment final. The breach was now so completely widened by the strong measures that had been adopted, that, from that period, it may be considered as irreparable. That the cause of the Seceders was decidedly popular, amongst a large class of the community, is sufficiently apparent from the number of petitions that were poured in upon the Associate Presbytery's table, from all parts of the country. So numerous and so urgent were the demands made upon them for sermon, that, without being constantly from home, they could not answer one-half of the applications that were made to them.

At that period, the principles of religious freedom were not so well understood as they are at present, and the most mean and unbecoming attempts were made to check the progress of the Secession. Those in the higher ranks professed to regard the Seceders as turbulent, disaffected persons; while the vulgar, catching the infection from their superiors, entertained the most illiberal prejudices against all those who joined the standard of the Secession. In various districts of the country, this spirit of hostility displayed itself in petty acts of aggression. Mr. Ebenezer Erskine having engaged to preach at Blairlogie,

in the neighbourhood of Stirling, a tent was erected for him by his friends in that quarter; but, on the morning of the day on which the religious services were to take place, the tent was broken to fragments by some ill-disposed persons. Mr. Erskine, however, was not to be thus deterred from doing his Master's work. At his suggestion, the people prepared for him a temporary erection; and, having covered it with their tartan plaids, to shelter the preacher from the weather, Mr. Erskine, after a solemn address to the inhabitants of the district, concerning the wickedness that had been done amongst them, conducted the exercises of the day as if nothing unusual had taken place. A large congregation having assembled at Braidsraig, in the neighbourhood of Edinburgh, where Messrs. R. Erskine and William Wilson were engaged in conducting the services of a fast, repeated attempts were made, during the time of worship, to throw the people into a state of alarm, and to drive them from the ground which they occupied. Some mischievous persons, by shooting at game in the immediate vicinity of the spot where the people were assembled, and by setting fire to the furze and shrubs, with which the ground was covered, endeavoured to disperse the congregation. The tent in which the ministers were officiating, had to be guarded by a band of men, to prevent it from being overturned. "At St. Andrews, such of the inhabitants as had connected themselves with the congregation of Abernethy, were regularly, on their way home from public worship, attacked by a mob, and pelted with stones, or otherwise abused. One of them was accustomed to say, 'Could our neighbours be convinced that they confer an honour in thus accounting us worthy to suffer an injury for the sake of the gospel, they would soon desist from their present practices.'"<sup>4</sup>

In certain instances, landlords threatened to turn their tenants out of their farms, if they permitted the Seceders to assemble, for worship, on their ground, or gave them any countenance. The Earl of Belhaven, in East Lothian, having threatened to deprive a respectable tenant of his lease, because he chose to attend a Secession place of worship, received from him the following dignified reply:—"My Lord, my grandfather, father, and myself, have all been comfortable as tenants on your Lordship's estate; but we never surrendered our consciences to you; and, if your Lordship is resolved to be the first persecutor in East Lothian, for conscience' sake, I am determined to be the first in submitting to persecution."

The press also teemed with angry pamphlets against the

Secession. Messrs. John Currie of Kinglassie, and John Williamson of Inveresk, took the lead in this species of warfare; and, by their mode of conducting it, acquired to themselves an inglorious notoriety. Though there is reason to believe that both of them were good men, yet, in carrying on this controversy, they displayed a bitterness of spirit that was unbecoming their character as ministers of the gospel of peace. They admitted that there were corruptions in the Church of Scotland, but denied that these corruptions were such as to render a separation from her necessary. The sum and substance of the charges which they reiterated, in a variety of forms, against the Seceders was, that in withdrawing from the communion of a true church, such as the Church of Scotland was acknowledged to be, they acted in opposition to the authority of scripture, to the confessions of all the reformed churches, to the constitution and standards of their own church, and to the practice of many eminent men of former times, who, while they admitted and deplored the corruptions and defections that prevailed in the national church, still continued in her communion.

To these charges the Seceders replied, that while they readily admitted, that separation from a church was not to be lightly or hastily made, even though corruptions did prevail in it, yet when a church, in her judicative capacity, carries on a course of defection, in an obstinate way, and suppresses all attempts at testifying against her defections, by preaching, by petitions, and protestations, then it is the duty of all who wish to maintain the purity of the faith and the interests of religion, to withdraw from her communion. They further maintained, that they did not pretend to be a distinct church from the Church of Scotland, but to be a separate party in that church, who had withdrawn from the corrupt majority, until they should effect a reformation of the abuses and corruptions that prevailed. The reasoning of their opponents against them, they alleged, if it proved any thing, in reference to the question at issue between them, proved too much; for the same arguments might be employed to show that separation from the Church of Rome, or from any other church, however corrupt, was sinful and unwarrantable. The person who stood forward as the chief defender of the Secession against the attacks that were made upon it through the medium of the press, was the Rev. Mr. Wilson of Perth. His "Defence," and the "Continuation" of it, in reply to Mr. Currie, have long been justly admired as excellent specimens of controversial reasoning.

Many of the good ministers of the Church of Scotland regretted the separation that had taken place, and continued

to cherish toward the Seceding brethren sentiments of sincere respect. A worthy minister from the country, meeting accidentally with Mr. Ralph Erskine, in one of the narrow thoroughfares of Edinburgh, soon after sentence of deposition had been pronounced by the Assembly, was so overcome by recollections of their former friendship, that he burst into tears and exclaimed, "O! Mr. Erskine, I am *wae*\* that they have cast you out." He then fell upon his neck, and kissed him. Mr. Erskine, after receiving his salutation, smilingly replied, "I wonder Mr. G. that you can venture to kiss a deposed minister."

The deposition of the Seceding ministers by the Assembly had no influence in checking the progress of the Secession. New accessions were made to them from all quarters. The cry amongst the people was both loud and general for preachers to be sent to them by the Presbytery; and it was so far fortunate, with a view to the answering of these demands, that the hands of the Presbytery were at this time strengthened by some of the probationers of the Established Church placing themselves under their superintendence. Two of these probationers, Mr. Gavin Beugo, and Mr. James Mair, gave in their adherence to the Presbytery, at a meeting held in Stirling, in the month of July 1739. As the paper of accession laid on the Presbytery's table, by Mr. Beugo, contains in it a brief statement of the grounds of the Secession, and may be regarded as a specimen of the general tenor in which similar applications were made to the Presbytery, I shall here quote it at full length:—

"Unto the Reverend the Moderator and remanent members of the Associate Presbytery, met at Stirling, the 17th day of July 1739 years,

"Having considered that this National Church, as represented in her judicatories, has in several instances made defection from our reformation principles, particularly in the matter of the settlement of gospel ministers, by intruding ministers into parishes, in opposition to the declared inclination of the Christian people, whereby they are deprived of that right which is allowed them by the word of God, and the laudable constitutions and acts of the Church of Scotland, to the oppressing, scattering, and dividing of the flock of Christ; and further considering that several very dangerous errors, destructive of Christianity, have been brought to the bar of church judicatories, and have either been passed without any censure at all, or with a censure very disproportional to the demerit of the fault, which is contrary to the

\* Sorry.

character of the church of the living God, mentioned by the apostle Paul, 1 Timothy iii. 15, where it is called the pillar and ground of truth, signifying to us that it ought to be the business of the church to hold forth and confess the truth publicly and openly, and to maintain and defend the same against the attempts of adversaries to overturn the same; as also, that the greatest part of the ministers of the Established Church have submitted to an erastian encroachment upon the headship of Christ, by reading an act of parliament lately emitted concerning Captain Porteous, contrary to Galatians i. 10, where the apostle says, 'If I yet please men, I should not be the servant of Christ;' and that the rest of the ministers have joined in church judicatories with them, without signifying their displeasure thereanent. Upon these and other accounts, more fully set forth in a Judicial Act and Testimony emitted by the Associate Presbytery, I cannot with freedom submit myself to these judicatories thus carrying on a course of defection. On the other hand, having considered that several brethren in the ministry have made a Secession from the judicatories of the Established Church, and have constituted themselves into a Presbytery in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, the great and glorious Head of the church, and in that capacity have lifted up a testimony for the truth against the abounding errors and backslidings of the day, and having seen and considered several papers set forth by them, and particularly a paper entitled, *A Judicial Act and Testimony*, formerly mentioned, I cannot but in my judgment approve of the same as a suitable and a seasonable testimony for the truth, and against several errors and corruptions of the day, and I resolve, through the Lord's assistance, to do what is incumbent upon me in my station to promote the design of the same. And I hereby declare my accession to the said Presbytery, and promise due subjection to them in the Lord, and this I reckon myself obliged to do by virtue of the engagements I came under, when I was licensed to preach the gospel, at which time I was bound to maintain the doctrine, worship, discipline and government of the Church of Scotland founded on the word of God, and her standards agreeable thereunto. May Zion's King give success to the labours of the Associate Presbytery in the Lord's work among their hands.

"Subscribed by me day and date above,

"GA. BEUGO."

Mr. John Hunter, the first licentiate of the Secession Church, having received a call from the united congregations of Morebattle and Stitchell, the Presbytery met at Gatheshaw

on the 17th of October, 1739, for the purpose of ordaining him. This being the first ordination at which the brethren had been called upon to assist, since their separation from the national church, the occasion was regarded as peculiarly solemn. The day was appointed to be observed as a day of fasting; and the public services commenced by Mr. Thomson offering up supplication for the divine presence and blessing. Mr. Ralph Erskine preached from Luke xiv. 23, "Compel them to come in that my house may be filled." The formula of questions, previously prepared by the Presbytery, was then proposed to Mr. Hunter, and satisfactory answers being returned, he was solemnly set apart to the office of the holy ministry by prayer and imposition of hands. The ministerial career of this promising young man was but of short duration. It pleased the all-wise Disposer of events to remove him from the scene of his earthly labours in the month of January in the following year, scarcely three months after he was ordained. His early death was lamented both by his congregation and by the Presbytery. His talents and popularity were such as to give promise of great usefulness in the church.

The following anecdote of the late Principal Robertson, shows that Mr. Hunter's talents for producing an impression upon his auditors were of a superior order:—During the first years of the Secession, it was customary for fasts to be held in the different districts of the country, by appointment of the Presbytery. On these occasions, one or two ministers preached to large assemblages of people who were collected from the surrounding neighbourhood. One of these fasts being held in the vicinity of Gladsmuir, for the benefit of the East Lothian Seceders, the Principal, who was then a boy, and on a visit to his grandfather, the parish minister of Gladsmuir, attended along with the rest of the people. Mr. Hunter was the person who officiated. Young Robertson's attention was quite arrested by the earnestness and seriousness of the preacher, and by the solemn and impressive manner in which he made an offer of Christ to the audience. Many years afterwards, when the Principal had raised himself, by his talents, to the highest eminence, both as a leader in the church, and as a member of the republic of letters, in a conversation which he had with one of the ministers of the Secession, he stated to him the circumstance of his having heard, in early life, Mr. Hunter preach, and the strong impression which had been produced upon him by Mr. Hunter's pointed appeals; and added, "Even yet, when I retire to my studies, the recollection of what I then heard thrills through my mind."

The untimely death of Mr. Hunter gave occasion to a member of the church of Scotland to remark to a Seceder, that

God was apparently frowning on their cause, when he had removed, at such an early period, their first licentiate, a man of such eminent talents:—"No," replied the other, "it is not a frown. You know, that God under the Jewish dispensation claimed the first-fruits, which secured a good harvest; and I expect that there will be raised up in the Secession Church a good harvest of gospel ministers." This remark, uttered at a venture, about a century ago, has been abundantly verified.

Though the number of members belonging to the Presbytery was now increased, and though they had several licentiates under their inspection,\* who were constantly employed in preaching to the vacant congregations, yet they still found themselves unable to answer the numerous applications that were made to them from the different districts of the country. At a meeting held at Dunfermline in the month of August, 1740, there were petitions laid upon their table from no fewer than nine congregations, all of them requesting that moderations might be appointed to take place amongst them, with a view to their obtaining a settled ministry. At this meeting a recommendation was issued to all who were under their inspection, to form themselves into societies for prayer and religious conference; and the members of these societies were earnestly exhorted to avoid questions that might tend to strife rather than to edifying. They were enjoined to give themselves to the diligent perusal of the Scriptures; to make themselves well acquainted with the Confession of Faith, and with the other subordinate standards of the church; and they were to compare the statements therein contained with the texts of Scripture adduced in support of them, so that their faith in these matters might not rest upon human but upon a divine testimony. It was further recommended to them, that they should study the principles of the Reformation, and interest themselves in the public cause of Christ; and heads of families were exhorted diligently to instruct their children and their servants in these things.

A question, relating to the appointment of public fasts, occupied at this time the attention of the Presbytery, and produced among the members thereof a collision of sentiment. The king, having in compliance with a petition from the Commission of the Assembly, appointed a general fast to be observed on the first day of February, 1740, the Associate Presbytery agreed that the same day should be set apart by the Secession congregations to a similar exercise. They considered that

\* The following are the names of the probationers, who at this period were under the superintendence of the Presbytery:—Messrs. Adam Gib, Andrew Clarkson, William Hutton, David Smyton, James Mair, Gavin Beugo, and William Young.

the circumstances, in which the nation was placed, were such as loudly called for fasting and humiliation; and while they refused to acknowledge the right of the king to appoint fasts, regarding this as an invasion of the prerogative of Jesus Christ, as Head of the church, yet they did not think the day which had been appointed less suitable on that account: and justly conceiving that the people under their inspection would be able to engage in this solemn exercise, on such a day, with less inconvenience to themselves, they therefore appointed it to be observed as a day of fasting, for reasons of their own which they specified.

This appointment gave offence to some of the people; and at next meeting a representation was sent up from certain societies in Ross-shire and Teviotdale, complaining that the Presbytery had so far *homologated* the invasion of the headship of Christ as to appoint a fast to be observed on a day, which had previously been appointed by the king. The Presbytery received the remonstrance in good part, and promised to take the subject into serious consideration, so as to prevent all ground of complaint for the future. It was not, however, till nearly a year had elapsed, when upon an application from the Commission, another day of fasting was appointed by the king, that the consideration of this subject was resumed. Messrs. Ebenezer and Ralph Erskine, Mr. Moncrieff, and Mr. Thomas Mair were appointed a committee to prepare an act relative to this matter, and to submit it to the Presbytery at a future meeting. The sentiments of the committee being divided upon this subject, it was not without considerable struggling that the draught of an act was prepared. This draught being submitted to the consideration of the Presbytery at their next meeting, it was, after some discussion, adopted by a majority of one; four of the members having voted *for*, and three *against* it. The majority consisted of Mr. Nairn, Mr. Moncrieff, Mr. Thomas Mair, and Mr. William Hutton (who was now a member of Presbytery); and the minority consisted of Messrs. Ebenezer and Ralph Erskine, and Mr. James Wardlaw, ruling elder from Dunfermline. The minority felt keenly on the subject, and Mr. Ebenezer Erskine was prevented from entering his dissent solely by prudential considerations. He easily perceived how discouraging it would be to their friends, and what a triumph it would afford to their enemies, should they behold the members of Presbytery at variance among themselves, after having been deposed only a few months previously by the Assembly.\*

In this act, which was passed at Dunfermline on the 9th

\* Brown's MS.

day of January, 1741, the Presbytery condemned the conduct of the Commission, in petitioning the king to appoint a fast, which they pronounced to be a voluntary giving up of the intrinsic power of the church; they also bore testimony against the usurpation, on the part of the civil magistrate, of the headship of Jesus Christ; and they further expressed their sorrow at their own conduct, in appearing to countenance such usurpation, when, in the preceding year, they appointed a fast to be observed on the day which had previously been set apart for this purpose by the authority of the state. After enumerating and bewailing the sins that abounded in the land, on account of which they were called upon to humble themselves in the sight of God, they express their sentiments, on the subject referred to, in the following terms:—

“Whereas,” say they, “the Commission of the last pretended Assembly have given up to the civil magistrate the power belonging to the church of Christ to appoint days of fasting and humiliation, and to name the day; and that we are informed from the public prints, that the civil magistrate hath assumed that power, unlawfully resigned to him by the Established Church, by appointing a fast, in consequence of the Commission’s application, to be observed in Scotland the fourth of February next; and though the Presbytery observed a fast last year on the same day appointed for that end by the magistrate, after declaring they could not observe the said day upon his authority, in the proclamation for that effect, but for the reasons mentioned in the act, for appointing the same day; yet however plausible these reasons at that time appeared unto us, we cannot now but apprehend, upon more mature consideration, and desire, in the first place, as the Lord shall assist, to own and acknowledge, that upon a mistake, we ourselves went too far in symbolizing with the above unwarrantable practice of the church’s giving up, and the magistrates assuming, the power of naming the day, by observing the same day appointed by the civil magistrate; and we desire through grace to lie low in the dust before the Lord, saying, ‘What we see not, teach thou us, and if we have done iniquity, we will do so no more.’ And though it was controverted, last year, that the intrinsic power of the church was both given up and assumed, in regard there were so few days between the meeting of the Commission and the date of the proclamation, yet now that the Commission have repeated their deed of a formal and voluntary giving up to the civil magistrate the intrinsic power of the church, by applying to the king for naming the day for fasting and humiliation, and that he hath appointed the day accordingly; it appears evident, that there is a sinful combination between church and state to make an

invasion upon the headship and sovereignty of our Lord Jesus Christ over his church as his free and independent kingdom; and we cannot but look upon it as a cause of humiliation before the Lord, that such manifest dishonour hath been done unto him whom God hath appointed King in his holy hill of Zion. The Lord our God, who name is jealous, is a jealous God. He is jealous of his worship and honour, and will not give his glory to another. And though it is the duty of all ranks to humble themselves before the Lord, and for each to stir up one another to this exercise; and particularly for the civil magistrate to excite those under him to this duty; yet as it is the duty of the office-bearers in the Lord's house to search out and discover the causes of the Lord's contending with a church and land, and to set apart times of solemn humiliation before the Lord on account of these, and even to say to kings and to queens, humble yourselves; so when a church does deliver up to the powers of the earth that trust and right which the Lord hath lodged in their hand, and when the civil magistrate adventures either to deprive the church of her right, or accept of and exercise that trust which she hath sinfully alienated, it is consenting to the alienation, and so incurring the guilt in conjunction with the church, of dethroning the Prince of the kings of the earth, the King of kings, and the Lord of lords."

This act gave offence to many even of the best friends of the Secession; they could not see either the reasonableness or propriety of it. Mr. Currie exclaimed against it, as an unwarrantable stretch of authority on the part of the Presbytery; and no person attempted to reply to him. The question, Whether it be lawful and right to appoint a fast to be observed on a day, which the civil magistrate has previously set apart for this purpose? is not one of much practical importance. It is difficult to perceive the force of the objection, which was urged against the adopting of such a day, viz. that it was a homologating of the invasion of the prerogative of Jesus Christ as Head of the church. It would probably have been as well, if the Presbytery had given no deliverance upon the subject, but left their congregations to act, in this matter, according to their own particular views. At all events, the question was assuredly not of such importance, as that the determining of it, whether in the affirmative or the negative, ought to have excited any feeling of bitterness either amongst the ministers or people.

The uncommon popularity of the Rev. George Whitefield, and the great success of his labours, drew toward him, at this time, the attention of the religious world. Educated in the Church of England, he had connected himself, while attend-

ing the University of Oxford, with the newly formed Society of Methodists, of which the two Wesleys, Hervey, and a few other pious young men, were the founders. Having received episcopal ordination from Benson, Bishop of Gloucester, at the early age of twenty-one, he visited Georgia twice, in the course of a few years, where he acquired for himself no small reputation by his indefatigable labours, and by the fervour and eloquence of his preaching. Admiring crowds attended his ministry, wherever he appeared; and there can be little doubt that, during his stay in America, he was the honoured instrument of producing serious impressions upon the hearts of not a few. One of his transatlantic brethren bearing testimony to the great success which attended his labour in that quarter, says:—"He appears to be full of the love of God, and fired with an extraordinary zeal for the cause of Christ, and applies himself with the most indefatigable diligence that ever was seen amongst us, for promoting the good of souls. His head, his heart, his hands, seem to be full of his Master's business. His discourses, especially when he goes into the expository way, are very entertaining; every eye is fixed upon him, and every ear chained to his lips; most are very much affected; many awakened and convinced; and a general seriousness excited. His address, more especially to the passions, is wonderful, and beyond what I have ever seen. I think I can truly say, that his preaching has quickened me, and I believe it has many others besides, as well as the people. Several of my flock, especially the younger sort, have been brought under convictions by his preaching; and there is this remarkable amongst them, of the good effect of his preaching, that the word preached now by us, seems more precious to them, and comes with more power upon them. My prayer for him is, that his precious life may be lengthened out, and that he may be an instrument of reviving dying religion in all places whithersoever he comes, who seems to be wonderfully fitted for, as well as spirited to, it."\*

When he returned to England, in the beginning of the year 1741, for the purpose of procuring collections for the Orphan-house which he had founded in Georgia, his labours were no less abundant and no less successful than they had been in America. Scarcely a day passed in which he did not preach several discourses, mostly in the open air. In many of the districts, which he visited, awakenings were produced; and such was the effect of his eloquence, that when he preached for charitable objects, hundreds of pounds were frequently collected at a single discourse.

\* Gillies' *Life of Whitefield*, p. 68.

The favourable accounts circulated concerning this distinguished preacher had induced the Messrs. Erskine to enter into an epistolary correspondence with him. He and they appear, at first, to have entertained for one another sentiments of mutual esteem. The honourable stand, which these men, in connexion with the other Seceding brethren, had made for the purity of the faith, and for the Christian liberties of the people; the harsh treatment which they had received from the prevailing party in the Established Church; and the signal success which had attended their labours in the ministry, drew toward them his favourable regards. They, on the other hand, were favourably impressed toward him, on account of the zeal, energy, and boldness which he displayed in preaching the gospel to his fellow-men; and they, in all probability, conceived that between him and them there was a considerable similarity, as to the relative position in which they stood toward their respective churches. Influenced by such considerations as these, the Seceders were desirous that Mr. Whitefield should pay a visit to Scotland; and his correspondence shows, that he was no less willing to come, than they were to receive him.

Whatever opinion may be entertained of the conduct which the members of the Associate Presbytery afterwards pursued toward Mr. Whitefield, there is no reason to question that the motives by which they were influenced, in inviting him to come and labour for a season in Scotland, were of the most laudable kind. It has been said that they were desirous, by means of his popularity, to procure attention and influence to their infant sect.\* This is a mere gratuitous assumption, altogether unwarranted by any thing that appears in the correspondence carried on between them. To impute wrong motives to any class of individuals, when right ones may be found, is altogether unworthy of an honourable mind; and it is humiliating to find writers, whose general character entitles them to respect, eagerly seizing upon actions that are at least harmless, if not laudable, in themselves, and holding them up in the most unfavourable light, that they may the more easily draw down upon an opponent the scorn and contempt of others. The "infant sect" of the Secession did not need the popularity of Mr. Whitefield, or of any other stranger, to procure for it attention and influence: it had already procured, by the intrinsic merits of its cause, a much larger share of these than its most sanguine friends either expected, or could have anticipated.

The Messrs. Erskine, who corresponded with Mr. Whitefield, in reference to his intended visit to Scotland, appear to

\* Sir H. Moncrieff's *Life of Dr. Erskine*, p. 93.

have had two objects in view, in wishing him to come amongst them : The one was, that he might be instrumental, by the uncommon gifts which he possessed, in promoting a revival of religion in their native land, as he had done in many parts of England and America ; and the other was, the probability of a closer union being formed betwixt him and the Presbytery, so that they might co-operate together in carrying on the same good work. That they were not mistaken with regard to the first of these objects, the result sufficiently proved ; and certain expressions, which Mr. Whitefield had used in his correspondence with them, gave them some ground to hope that the second might also be accomplished.

Mr. Ralph Erskine, in some of his letters to Mr. Whitefield, had given him an account of the Scottish covenants ; had detailed to him the proceedings of the Assembly, with regard to the deposition of the Seceding ministers ; had stated to him what were the principles which the Presbytery held concerning church government ; and had also mentioned, in a friendly way, what were his own views concerning church communion ; with all which Mr. Whitefield had expressed himself so far satisfied. In his answers to these communications, he stated, " that he was willing to sit down at the feet of the Associate Presbytery, and learn the way of Christ more fully ; " and " that he was perhaps more of their mind, as to many things, than they were aware of ; " with other expressions of similar import. \* Such statements as these were certainly calculated to inspire hope, on the part of the Seceding brethren, that, should he and they be permitted to meet, such explanations might be given as would remove existing prejudices, and bring them to a mutual understanding upon points, with regard to which they now differed. It is not, however, to be disguised, that when Mr. Whitefield wrote to Mr. Ralph Erskine, stating to him his inclination to visit Scotland, Mr. Erskine, in his reply, expressed in strong terms, his desire that Mr. Whitefield, during his stay in Scotland, would, if not wholly, at least in a great measure, identify himself in his ministrations with the Associate Presbytery. In cherishing and expressing such a desire, Mr. Erskine was not influenced by the paltry motive of procuring attention and influence to the " infant sect " to which he belonged : he was influenced by motives of a much higher order. He conceived that he, and those who were connected with him in the Presbytery, were engaged in carrying forward a great public cause,—a cause which, in their estimation, deeply involved in it the glory of God, and the best interests of the human race. In giving

\* Brown's MS.

their support to this cause, they had, by an unrighteous sentence, been deprived of their livings; had been branded as troublers of the peace of Zion; and had encountered no small reproach. They were engaged in a struggle, which had for its object the advancement of the work of reformation in Scotland. Such being the circumstances in which they were placed, they naturally concluded, that if Mr. Whitefield, after professing such a high regard for the Associate Presbytery, should make no distinction betwixt them and their persecutors, but give as much countenance in his ministrations to the latter as to the former, this would afford a just ground of triumph to their opponents, and might materially affect the success of the cause in which they were embarked. It was upon this public ground, and on this ground alone, that they expressed a desire that he would make a common cause with them, so far as he consistently could, while he continued in Scotland.

That such were the views which they entertained, the following extracts from their letters abundantly prove. Mr. Ralph Erskine, in a letter dated Dunfermline, 10th April, 1741, and sent to Mr. Whitefield only a few months before he arrived in Scotland, says, "There is no face on earth I would desire more earnestly to see than yours, and there is none would be more welcome than you, with whom there is so much, I think, of our glorious Master's spirit. Yet I would desire it only in a way that I think would tend most to the advancing of our Lord's kingdom, and the reformation work among our hands. Such is the situation of affairs among us, that, unless you came with a design to meet and abide with us, particularly of the Associate Presbytery, and to make your public appearances in the places, especially of their concern, or by their counsel, direction, or advice, I would dread the consequences of your coming, lest it should seem equally to countenance our persecutors, and those that are opposing the work of reformation among our hands. You know upon what grounds we have made a secession; and, as you have seen good ground to separate from the Wesleys, so we have separated from the established judicatories, and they have separated us from them, by a sentence of deposition, passed in the General Assembly; and inferior judicatories are generally homologating, and some of them where we reside, executing the sentence as far as they can, and would do more, were it not that they fear the people, who generally flock to us, while we, in the mean time, are, through grace, going on in our work, and sometimes have the Lord sensibly with us. I would, therefore, wish for such a coming as might more and more unite the friends of truth and reformation to one another, strengthen our hands, still our adversaries, and fill their faces with shame, that they

may seek His name : they want to pour all the contempt upon us, and our way, they can, though still it has redounded to their disadvantage. Your fame would occasion a flocking to you, to what ever side you would turn ; and if it should be in their pulpits (as no doubt some of them would urge), we know how it would be improven against us ; we have been sometimes already upbraided with your having more of the Lord's presence than we, and yet never separating from the Church of England, notwithstanding of their corruptions, though it is ill argued when cases differ so much.”\*

After receiving this letter, Mr. Whitefield wrote to Mr. Ebenezer Erskine, mentioning the proposal which had been made to him by his brother Ralph, and stating that he “ could not altogether come into it.” He stated further, that, instead of connecting himself with any particular party, he meant to come to Scotland “ only as an occasional preacher, to preach the simple gospel to all who were willing to hear him, of whatever denomination ;” “ that it would be wrong in him to join in a reformation as to church government, any further than he had light given him from above ;” and he begged that the Presbytery “ would not be offended, if, in all things, he could not immediately fall in with them.”

To this letter Mr. Ebenezer Erskine sent an affectionate and candid reply, in which he pointedly disclaimed, on the part of the Presbytery, any party views. After giving a brief account of the treatment which they had received from the Assembly, in being deposed from the ministry, and ejected from their churches, he adds,—“ From this short glimpse of the state of matters among us, you will easily see what reason the Associate Presbytery have to say, ‘ Come up to the help of the Lord against the mighty ;’ for the enemy comes in like a flood, but I hope the Spirit of the Lord will lift up a standard against him. We hear that God is with you of a truth, and therefore we wish for as intimate a connexion with you in the Lord as possible, for building up the fallen tabernacle of David in Britain, and particularly in Scotland, when you shall be sent to us. This, dear brother, and no party views, is at the bottom of any proposal made by my brother Ralph, in his own name, and in the name of his Associate brethren. It would be very unreasonable to propose or urge that you should incorporate as a member of our Presbytery, and wholly embark in every branch of our reformation, unless the Father of lights were clearing your way thereunto ; which we pray he may enlighten in his time, so as you and we may see eye to eye. All intended by us at present is, that, when you come

\* Gillies' Life of Whitefield, p. 275.

to Scotland, your way may be such as not to strengthen the hands of our corrupt clergy and judicatories, who are carrying on a course of defection, worming out a faithful ministry from the land, and the power of religion with it. Far be it from us to limit your great Master's commission to preach the gospel to every creature. We ourselves preach the gospel to all promiscuously who are willing to hear us. But we preach not upon the call and invitation of the ministers, but of the people, which I suppose is your own practice now in England ; and, should this also be your way, when you come to Scotland, it could do the Associate Presbytery no manner of harm. But if, besides, you could find freedom to company with us, to preach with us and for us, and to accept of our advices in your work, while in this country, it might contribute much to weaken the enemy's hand, and to strengthen ours in the work of the Lord, when the strength of the battle is against us."\*

These extracts sufficiently explain how far, and for what purpose, the Seceding brethren wished Mr. Whitefield to co-operate with them. Their views may, by some, be pronounced sectarian. On this point each individual will, of course, judge for himself. Their motives at least, with regard to the proposed co-operation, are unimpeachable. They acted in the matter as honest conscientious men ought to have done; and it is difficult to perceive what other course they could have pursued, consistently with the principles which they held.

On the 30th of July, 1741, Mr. Whitefield arrived at Leith, on his first visit to Scotland ; and though solicitations were made to him by some persons of distinction to preach at Edinburgh soon after his arrival, yet he refused to do so, being determined that the Messrs. Erskine should have the first offer of his services. He accordingly hastened to Dunfermline, and made his first appearance in public in Mr. Ralph Erskine's pulpit. It was immediately proposed that a conference should take place betwixt him and the members of the Associate Presbytery, with a view to a friendly discussion of the points at issue between them, and especially in reference to the form of church government. This conference took place at Dunfermline on the 5th of August. The members of Presbytery present were Messrs. Ebenezer and Ralph Erskine, Mr. Moncrieff, Mr. Gib, Messrs. Thomas and James Mair, Mr. Clarkson, ministers ; with two elders. Mr. Whitefield, previous to the meeting taking place, had, in a conversation with Mr. R. Erskine, conceded to him so far concerning his episcopal ordination, " that he would not take it again for a thousand worlds,

\* Dr. Fraser's *Life of the Rev. E. Erskine*, p. 424.

but at the time he knew no better." \* Mr. Ebenezer Erskine, at the request of the brethren, opened the meeting with prayer. The question proposed for consideration was, What is the form of church government which Christ has laid down in his word? The Seceders were desirous that they and Mr. Whitefield should come to a mutual understanding on this point. Mr. Whitefield expressed himself friendly to the principle of toleration, and wished that each, on the subject of church government, should be allowed to hold his own particular views. In reference to the question proposed, he asked, "Whether the presbyterian government be that which is agreeable to the pattern shown in the mount, and if so, whether it excluded a toleration of those who might not have the same views, such as independents, anabaptists, and episcopalians, among whom there are good men?" In answer to this question, Mr. Ebenezer Erskine said, "Sir, God has made you an instrument of gathering a great multitude of souls to the faith and profession of the gospel of Christ throughout England, and also in foreign parts; and now it is fit that you should be considering how that body is to be organized and preserved, which cannot be done without following the example of Paul and Barnabas, who, when they had gathered churches by the preaching of the gospel, visited them again, and ordained over them elders in every city, which you cannot do alone, without some two or three met together in a judicative capacity, in the name of the Lord." To this Mr. Whitefield replied, "That he reckoned it his present duty to go on preaching the gospel, without proceeding to any such work." It was urged, on the other side, "That it might please the Lord to call upon him, and in that case, there being none other, the flock might be scattered, and fall into the hands of grievous wolves, without any to care for them." He said, "that being of the communion of the Church of England, he had none to join with him in that work; and that he had no freedom to separate from this church, until that they cast him out." The articles of the presbyterian form of church government were then read to him along with passages of Scripture in support of them; and one of the brethren addressed him at considerable length, for the purpose of showing him, that neither episcopacy nor independency were agreeable to the word of God.†

\* This fact, which is by no means creditable to Mr. Whitefield's consistency, was communicated in a letter from Mr. Ralph Erskine to his brother Ebenezer; and it is here stated, on the authority of a written account, which has been found in one of Mr. E. Erskine's note-books in his own hand-writing.

† This account of the conference between Mr. Whitefield and the brethren of the Associate Presbytery is inserted chiefly on the authority of a memorandum, written by Mr. Ebenezer Erskine in one of his note-books, and which

These efforts to convert Mr. Whitefield into a presbyterian were wholly unsuccessful. When the articles, relative to presbytery, were read to him, he made no objections to them, neither did he attempt any reply to the arguments which were urged against the other forms of government. What he chiefly pled for was toleration. He professed to regard church government as a matter of no great importance; and he declared his resolution, notwithstanding all that had been said, to continue in the communion of the Church of England. The brethren never required him to subscribe the Solemn League and Covenant, neither did they ask him whether he was willing to confine his ministrations to their pulpits during his stay in Scotland. But when they found that his sentiments on the subject of church government differed so widely from theirs, they resolved, after mature deliberation, that until his views in this respect should undergo a change, they would not hear him, nor employ him in any part of the ministerial work.\*

has been lately published by Dr. Fraser, in his *Life of Mr. R. Erskine* (p. 333). Some of the facts are given on the authority of the late Professor Brown of Haddington, who appears to have derived his information from a written account which was handed about at the time.

\* Dr. Gillies, in his *Life of Whitefield* (p. 78), represents the following dialogue as taking place betwixt the brethren of the Presbytery and Mr. Whitefield at their conference. Mr. Whitefield having asked what they wished him to do? their answer was, "That they did not desire him to subscribe immediately to the Solemn League and Covenant, but to preach only for them till he had farther light." "Why only for them?" asked Mr. Whitefield. Mr. R. Erskine replied, "They were the Lord's people." Mr. Whitefield then asked, "Were no other the Lord's people but themselves? If not, and if others were the devil's people, they had more need to be preached to; that, for his part, all places were alike to him, and that if the pope himself would lend him his pulpit, he would gladly proclaim in it the righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ." This account has been copied by Sir Henry Moncrieff Wellwood, in his *Life of Dr. Erskine* (p. 95). I have no hesitation in saying, that this is a caricatured description of what took place at the interview betwixt Mr. Whitefield and the Seceders. I do not blame either of the respectable writers now mentioned for this caricature. They gave it as themselves found it. But the source from which they both derived it, is one to which much credit is not to be attached, viz. Mr. Whitefield's *Journals and Letters*. We have Mr. Whitefield's own authority for declaring, that many things were inserted in these Journals which were rash and uncharitable, being written under the influence of false impressions, and for which he afterwards found himself under the necessity of making an apology both from the pulpit and the press. After the following acknowledgments made by himself, with regard to the general inaccuracies contained in his Journals, I ask, what credit is due to his recorded representations of facts, especially when these representations are at variance with the statements of persons whose veracity and accuracy have never been called in question? "In my former Journal, taking things by hearsay too much, I spoke and wrote too harshly, both of the colleges and ministers of New England, for which, as I have already done when at Boston last, from the pulpit, I take this opportunity of asking public pardon from the press. It was rash and uncharitable, and though well meant, I fear did hurt."—*Note in Gillies' Life of Whitefield*, p. 36. Again, he says, "Yesterday I made an end of revising all my Journals. Alas! alas! in how

The part which the Presbytery acted on this occasion, may be thought by some to be sufficiently bigotted. On this point, each is at liberty to form an opinion for himself. I would merely add, by way of apology for them, that they were by no means singular in the sentiments which they entertained. Their conduct, in refusing to hold Christian or ministerial communion with Mr. Whitefield, on the ground of a diversity of opinion about church government, was quite consistent with their avowed principles. Besides, a large portion of the ministers in the Church of Scotland refused to hold communion with Mr. Whitefield exactly on the same ground, and were considerably offended with some of their brethren for admitting him into their pulpits. A few years after this, a motion was brought forward in the synod of Glasgow, and carried by a large majority, having for its avowed object the preventing of ministers in the National Church from employing Mr. Whitefield. The motion was indeed expressed in general terms, so as to avoid the appearance of personality; and so as to give as little offence as possible to Mr. Whitefield's friends; but the supporters of the motion did not conceal, in the course of the debate, that he was the person to whom the motion was chiefly intended to apply.\*

The result of the conference between Mr. Whitefield and the Presbytery, was the breaking up of all future correspondence. The sentiments of esteem with which they had previously regarded one another, were changed into a spirit of hostility; and, in the mutual recriminations that followed, language was employed on both sides which Christian charity obliges me to condemn. The Seceders were accused by Mr. Whitefield of building a Babel, which would soon fall down about their ears; and he, on the other hand, was stigmatized by them as a wild enthusiast, who was engaged in doing the work of Satan. A short time after the conference took place, Mr. Whitefield paid a visit to Stirling; and, having entered the tent where Mr. Erskine was engaged in preaching to the people, on a week-day, he sat and heard him. When Mr. Erskine had finished, Mr. Whitefield succeeded him in addressing the people; but Mr. Erskine would not stay to hear him, on account of his having acknowledged

many things have I judged and acted wrong! I have been too rash and hasty in giving characters both of places and persons. Being fond of scripture language, I have often used a style too apostolical; and at the same time, I have been too bitter in my zeal. Wild fire has been mixed with it; and I find that I frequently wrote and spoke in my own spirit, when I thought I was writing and speaking by the assistance of the Spirit of God."—*Note*, p. 152. These, it must be admitted, are candid confessions on the part of Mr. Whitefield; and they show us with what caution we ought to receive the account which he gives of transactions in which he was engaged.

\* Moncrieff's Life of Dr. Erskine, p. 130.

himself to be of the communion of the Church of England. It does not appear that, after this period, Mr. Whitefield had any personal intercourse with any of the brethren of the Presbytery, if we except a short interview which he had, some years afterward, with Mr. Ralph Erskine, in which, notwithstanding all that had taken place, they embraced one another, and Mr. Erskine said, "We have seen strange things."

A few months after these transactions, the Secession sustained a great loss in the death of one of its brightest ornaments, the Reverend Mr. Wilson of Perth, who, after a life of laborious and honourable service, in the work of his divine Master, breathed his last on the 8th of October, 1741. The incessant toil to which, after the commencement of the Secession, and more especially after his appointment to the theological professorship, he was subjected, gradually undermined a constitution that was naturally robust, and induced a premature old age. The sphere of his ministry, in such a populous town as Perth, was extensive. He had to preach, for the most part, four times a-week, besides attending to all the other public duties of his office. The chief defences of the Secession, that issued from the press, were prepared by him. In addition to all these labours, to him was assigned, by the Presbytery, as we have already seen, the charge of the young men who were training up for the office of the holy ministry; and never did a professor discharge more faithfully the duties of that sacred trust. Such was the flourishing state of the Theological Hall, under his able superintendence, that at the time of his death, it was attended by a greater number of candidates for the ministry, than almost any similar institution in Scotland.\* His frame gradually sunk under these complicated and arduous labours, and in the very midst of his usefulness was he removed from this earthly scene. He finished his useful and honourable career in the fifty-first year of his age. His death was mourned as a public loss, not only by his congregation, and the students under his charge, but by the whole Secession Church. The following testimony to his piety and worth has been borne by one who was well qualified, from his personal knowledge of him, to give an opinion upon the subject.† "Mr. Wilson was a man of great fervour, and frequent wrestling with God,—a man that, together with his learning, evidenced much prudence and moderation, and who, in preaching, evidenced the greatest concern, heavenliness, mildness, and majesty of any that ever I heard. I can recollect that, when sitting on the *Brae* of Abernethy, hearing him, I got more insight into that marrow of the gos-

\* Letter from Mr. R. Erskine to Mr. Whitefield, dated April 10, 1741.

† The late Professor Brown of Haddington.

pel, *my God*, than ever I got before or since.”\* After the death of Mr. Wilson, the theological seminary was transferred from Perth to Abernethy: Mr. Moncrieff having been appointed by the Presbytery to superintend the studies of the young men who were training up for the office of the holy ministry.

During the year 1742, certain events took place which excited the attention of the religious world, and called forth no small ebullition of party feeling in Scotland. In the controversy to which these events gave rise, the Secession bore a prominent part; but truth and candour require me to state, that the part which the leaders of it acted, on this occasion, was by no means creditable to their cause. Mr. Whitefield's ministrations, during the preceding year, had produced a religious stir in various districts of the country. The minds of many had been seriously impressed by his impassioned mode of address, and by his rousing appeals to the conscience. Both in the large towns and in the villages, he had acquired, by his preaching, a popularity that was hitherto unprecedented: and, in consequence of the astonishing efforts which he had made, revivals in religion began to be talked of, as an almost every day occurrence. After the difference had taken place betwixt Mr. Whitefield and the Associate Presbytery, his cause was warmly espoused by a number of ministers connected with the popular party in the Church of Scotland. They admitted him into their pulpits; they accompanied him in his journeys; they employed him to assist in dispensing the ordinance of the Supper; and they bestowed upon his ministrations the highest encomiums.

Amongst the number of his devoted admirers, was Mr. M'Culloch, minister of Cambuslang, a man of piety, and of simplicity of heart, but not distinguished either for strength of intellect, or for literary attainments. With the view of awakening a religious concern amongst his people, he circulated amongst them printed accounts of the revivals that were

\* Those who wish to know more about this excellent man, will find an interesting account of him in a life lately published by the Rev. Andrew Ferrier of Newart-hill. The following anecdote connected with the death of Mr. Wilson, extracted from the work now mentioned, will prove gratifying to my readers:—"Though his illness was severe, yet hopes of recovery were entertained till the last day of his life. Hearing of his distress, his son Gilbert, who was but eleven years of age, hurried home from Abernethy, where he was attending school. But all was over when he arrived at Perth. As he approached the house, he met those who had been waiting on his father withdrawing, and, from their appearance, could easily perceive what had taken place. He rushed into the room, where he found his mother and the rest of the children in tears. 'Mother,' said the interesting youth, grasping her hand, 'We have a new claim on God to-day. You, my dear mother, have a claim on him for a husband, and my sisters, brother, and myself, have a claim on him for a father.'"

taking place under the ministry of Mr. Whitefield. He also preached to them, for nearly a year, on the nature and necessity of regeneration, and seems to have been truly desirous to promote their spiritual welfare. A more than ordinary concern began at length to appear amongst them. A petition, subscribed by upwards of ninety heads of families, was presented to the minister, craving that, in addition to his Sabbath-day labours, he would institute amongst them a weekly lecture; which request was readily granted. At the first and second of these meetings, nothing particular occurred; but, on Thursday, the 18th of February, during the time of the discourse, a great commotion took place in the congregation. Some of the hearers were seized with faintings and bodily convulsions; some of them clapped their hands, and beat their breasts, and cried out, *that they saw hell opened for them, and heard the shrieks of the damned*. After sermon, about fifty persons, whose minds were distressed with the most alarming apprehensions, came to the minister's house, and the greater part of the night was spent in conversing with them.

"After this, numbers daily resorted to that place, some to hear the word, some to converse with people who were under this remarkable concern, and others with different views; and the desires and exigencies of those were such that the minister found himself obliged, without any previous intimation, to provide them daily sermon, a few days excepted; and, after sermon usually to spend some time with them in exhortations, prayers, and singing of psalms, being especially encouraged thereto, by the extraordinary success with which God was pleased, from time to time, to bless his own ordinances, in so much that, by the best information that could be had, the number of persons awakened to a deep concern about salvation, and against whom there are no known exceptions as yet, has amounted to above three hundred; and, through Divine mercy, the work seems to be still making considerable progress every week, and more for some weeks of late, than sometimes formerly."\*

As there was sermon almost every day, for a number of weeks, and as there were always some who were seized with convictions at each meeting, so the usual mode of procedure, in such cases was, for the persons who were thus affected to retire at the close of the service, along with the minister, to his own house. Their names, their designations, their place of abode, and the time and manner of their being seized, were all noted down in a register kept for the purpose; after which they were addressed according to their particular cases; and,

\* Robe's Narrative, p. 2.

in these exercises, which sometimes occupied a considerable portion of the night, the minister was assisted either by probationers, or by some of the more experienced of the people. Those who fell under convictions, continued in this state for a longer or a shorter period; some continued for a number of days, and others only for a few hours; and, in certain cases, they experienced a sudden transition from the deepest agony to the highest joy; and with transport they cried out, *that they had now gotten Christ, that they saw him with a pen blotting out their sins; that they had overcome Satan, and were become new creatures.* At the commencement of the services each day, the *wounded souls* (as they were termed,) were ranged in front of the tent, the most of them having their heads bound up with napkins, and dishes filled with water were placed at hand, to be ready in case of fainting.\*

Such unusual exhibitions as these, drew toward Cambuslang, the attention of ministers residing in distant parts of the country; and the people flocked, not only from the neighbouring parishes, but from more remote districts, to this favoured spot, that they might share in the reviving influences which were there experienced. In the month of June, Mr. Whitefield paid his second visit to Scotland; and no sooner was his arrival known, than earnest invitations were addressed to him, to come to Cambuslang. The very first day he arrived at that place, he preached to the people no fewer than three times, though he had, on the morning of the same day, preached at Glasgow. It was nearly midnight before he concluded his last discourse; and such was the eagerness of the people to hear, that Mr. McCulloch succeeded him, and continued preaching till past one in the morning; and, even after he had finished, it was with the utmost difficulty that they could prevail upon the people to depart. Mr. Whitefield gives the following description of what he witnessed, during his repeated visits to that place:—"Persons from all parts flocked to see, and many, from many parts, went home convinced and converted unto God. A brae or hill, near the manse at Cambuslang, seemed to be formed by Providence, for containing a large congregation. People sat unwearied till two in the morning, to hear sermons, disregarding the weather. You could scarce walk a yard, but you must tread upon some, either rejoicing in God, for mercies received, or crying out for more. Thousands and thousands have I seen, before it was possible to catch it by sympathy, melted down under the word and power of God."†

But the most remarkable of all the scenes exhibited at

\* Scots Magazine, May, 1742, p. 233. † Gillies' Life of Whitefield, p. 114.

Cambuslang, during this summer, was that which took place in the month of August, at the dispensation of the Lord's Supper. Though this ordinance had been dispensed in the preceding month, at the usual time of observing it, the minister and session resolved that, on account of the peculiar circumstances in which the parish was placed, another sacramental solemnity should be observed. It was calculated that on this occasion, upwards of 30,000 persons were assembled; and of these about 3000 communicated. All the services were conducted out of doors; three tents were erected; Mr. Whitefield, and the following ministers, assisted, viz. Mr. Webster, from Edinburgh; Mr. M'Laurin and Mr. Gillies, from Glasgow; Mr. Robe, from Kilsyth; Mr. Currie, from Kinglassie; Mr. M'Night, from Irvine; Mr. Bonner, from Torphichen; Mr. Hamilton, from Douglas; Mr. Henderson, from Blantyre; Mr. Maxwell, from Rutherglen; and Mr. Adam, from Cathcart. Of those who communicated, there were 200 from Edinburgh, 200 from Kilmarnock, 100 from Irvine, 100 from Stewarton, besides some who were present from England and Ireland. Several persons of rank assisted as elders, in serving the tables. Mr. M'Culloch, writing to a minister, and giving him an account of this solemnity, says, "Mr. Whitefield's sermons on Saturday, Sabbath, and Monday, were attended with much power, particularly on Sabbath night, about ten, and that on Monday, several crying out, and a very great, but decent, weeping and mourning was observable through the auditory. On Sabbath evening, while he was serving some tables, he appeared to be so filled with the love of God; as to be in a kind of ecstasy or transport, and communicated with much of that blessed frame. Time would fail me to speak of the evidences of the power of God coming along with the rest of the assistants." "Not a few were awakened to a sense of sin, and their lost and perishing condition, without a Saviour. Others had their bands loosed, and were brought into the marvellous liberty of the sons of God. Many of God's dear children have declared that it was a happy time to their souls, wherein they were abundantly satisfied with the goodness of God in his ordinances, and filled with all peace and joy in believing. I have seen a letter from Edinburgh, the writer of which says, 'That, having talked with many Christians in that city, who had been here at this Sacrament, they had owned that God had dealt bountifully with their souls on this occasion! Some that attended here declared, that they would not for a world have been absent from this solemnity; others cried, Now, let thy servants depart in peace, from this place, since our eyes have seen thy salvation here! Others wishing, if it

were the will of God, to die where they were attending God in his ordinances, without ever returning again to the world, or their friends, that they might be with Christ in heaven, as that which is incomparably best of all.' \*\*

The religious fervour of the people appears to have been wound up to its highest pitch at this solemnity; but, after this occasion, it began to subside; for, from this period, the daily sermons were given up, though the weekly lecture was still continued, and when the month of November arrived, the public services of the Sabbath, which during the summer and harvest months had been conducted in the open air, on account of the crowds that attended, were again transferred to the church. Though Cambuslang was the chief scene of this strong religious excitement, yet it was not confined wholly to that neighbourhood; other districts experienced it, though in a more limited measure.

The events now narrated were regarded in a very unfavourable light by the Seceders. The *Cambuslang Work* (as it was ordinarily termed), and Mr. Whitefield, as the chief promoter of it, were condemned by them in no measured terms. He was stigmatized as a deceiver and a destroyer of the souls of men, as one of the false Christs prophesied of in scripture, as Satan himself transformed into an angel of light; and the religious revival which he had been instrumental in producing, was described as "the present awful work upon the bodies and spirits of men," as "a black affair," as "a gangrene that had overspread the land." The press teemed with angry pamphlets; and the pulpits resounded with loud and oft-repeated warnings against the ministrations of such a dangerous person. His friends, on the other hand, were no less strenuous in his defence. They eulogized him for his enlightened zeal, his ardent piety, his faithful preaching of the gospel, and his disinterested exertions on behalf of his perishing fellow-men. They contended that he had been honoured above almost every individual in awakening sinners to a sense of their danger, and in promoting the interests of the Redeemer's kingdom, both at home and abroad.†

\* Robe's Narrative, p. 38.

† Those ministers who acted the most prominent part in this controversy were Mr. Adam Gib of Edinburgh, Mr. Ralph Erskine of Dunfermline, and Mr. James Fisher of Glasgow, on the one side; and Mr. James Robe of Kilsyth, Mr. Alexander Webster of Edinburgh, and Mr. John Willison of Dundee, on the other. The following anecdote, which has been received from a relation of Mr. Gib, shows that that gentleman was afterward sorry for the part which he took in this controversy. A friend being asked by him whether he had read his publications, his friend replied, that he had not read his pamphlet against Mr. Whitefield. Mr. Gib said, "Don't read it. When I wrote it, I was warm-blooded, and it would have been much better if I had not written it."

The Associate Presbytery viewed the matter in such a serious light, that at a meeting held at Dunfermline on the 15th July, they appointed the 4th of August to be observed as a day of fasting and humiliation by all the congregations under their charge, on account of the work of delusion that was carrying on. A long statement of reasons for appointing the fast was published by them, in which they employed language concerning Mr. Whitefield, and those who countenanced his ministrations, that even their fondest admirers will not now venture to defend. Speaking of Mr. Whitefield, they say, "It is no wonder that the Lord hath, in his righteous displeasure, left this church and land to give such an open discovery of their apostacy from him, in the fond reception that Mr. George Whitefield has met with, notwithstanding it is notourly known that he is a priest of the Church of England, who hath sworn the oath of supremacy, and abjured the Solemn League and Covenant, endeavours, by his lax toleration principles, to pull down the hedges of government and discipline which the Lord has planted about his vineyard in this land; and in the account he gives of his life, makes a plain discovery of the grossest enthusiasm, and most palpable error and delusion, touching his own experience with reference to the effectual application of the redemption purchased by Christ; yet because he is found to be a fit tool for bearing down a testimony for the reformation principles of this church, he is highly commended and extolled by several ministers in their printed letters, and likewise received into full communion with them. And thus, because they would choose their own way in opposition to our known principles, the Lord has also chosen their delusions in permitting the minds of multitudes through the land to be 'corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ, by departing from the faith, and giving heed to seducing spirits, who, by good words and fair speeches, deceive the hearts of the simple;' so that this is one of the periods wherein that threatening prophecy seems to be accomplished, 2 Tim. iv. 3, 4. *The time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears. And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables.*"

In reference to the work of religious revival, which Mr. Whitefield had been chiefly instrumental in producing and carrying on, they express themselves in the following terms:—"It is obvious, that bitter outcryings, faintings, severe bodily pains, convulsions, voices, visions, and revelations, are the usual symptoms of a delusive spirit, that have appeared in the Quakers, Sevennois, Camizars, and other enthusiasts, and

which no sound divine amongst us hath ever maintained as agreeable to, and concerned with, the saving operations of the Spirit of God. Nor will any of the fruits of this work that have hitherto been alleged, be sufficient to difference it either from the common work of the Spirit of God upon hypocrites, or from the delusions of Satan; but the following fruits and effects of it are undeniably evident, namely, the warmest aversion and opposition to a testimony for these very same principles which have been sworn to and suffered for unto blood in these lands; the closest conjunction with their ministers, though they are continuing to bear down these principles with a high hand, whether intruders or not; and a visible neglect, in many of them, of their relative and stational duties, contrary to the practice of Scriptural converts, and the experience of the saints of God in this land, who upon their conversion, still espoused the testimony of their day, and contended for the present truth: Which delusive spirit, if the Lord of his mercy prevents it not, may run out to a great length, to the throwing off of all religious and civil obligations, and involve these lands in the saddest calamities and direful confusions, as it has done in other kingdoms and states before, such as Germany, France, and other places."

The conduct of the Presbytery, in this matter, did not pass without severe animadversion. Mr. Robe, in the preface to his *Narratives*, characterized the statement of reasons which the Presbytery had published as "full of great swelling words, altogether void of the spirit of the meek and lowly Jesus, and the most heaven-daring paper that hath been published by any set of men in Britain these hundred years past." In a pamphlet, entitled *A Friendly Caution to Seceders*, their conduct was condemned as inconsistent; and they were charged with rashly opposing a work which had all the distinguishing marks of being a work of the Spirit. "In friendship and faithfulness to you," says the writer of the pamphlet, "I must not overlook the manner in which ye anticipate an objection against your using Mr. Whitefield so rudely. The objection is, How come such of you as were once in strict correspondence with Mr. Whitefield as an useful minister of Christ, and one of you went even so far as publicly to attend him in the tent when he preached, to break up all friendship with him, and treat him as your greatest enemy? Ye turn it off, by saying, *That whatever favourable expectations your Presbytery had at first formed of him, yet, when they afterwards came to have a close conversation with him, they found themselves very far disappointed, and therefore had no freedom to join in ministerial communion with him.* Truly I cannot help saying this looks rather like a blind for soothing your followers, than an

honest ingenuous answer to the objection, Did ye not know him to be a Church of England priest when ye corresponded with him in the character of a successful, zealous, and assiduous minister of Christ? Was it not, honestly, the true and only reason of your breaking up with him, that ye evidently saw ye could not possibly maintain your principles and sentiments before mentioned, nor keep up your credit with your followers, if ye joined with him in any manner in ministerial communion? What! (would they say) do our leaders forbid us to hear our own parish ministers, or any other minister of the Established Church, and do they yet encourage us to hear a Church of England curate?"

Again; "I was amazed to hear that ye are all united in the measure, not only of opposing Mr. Whitefield, but of being very angry with him, and of boldly imputing the work of the Holy Spirit on the hearts and minds of great numbers of persons, at Cambuslang, Kilsyth, and other places, to infernal agency. Your instituting a fast, and publishing for grounds of it, Mr. Whitefield's reception in Scotland, people's being imposed upon by several ministers attesting what has lately occurred in the west country to be the work of God, and the close conjunction of persons with their own ministers, quite astonishes me. If you must keep a fast, I beseech you change your grounds of it in the foresaid respect. Have nothing to do with Mr. Whitefield, nor with the work of God at Cambuslang and elsewhere, so as to oppose, or speak any thing amiss against him or it; for surely it is the work of God, a gracious and wonderful one; and, allow me to say it, he is a *man of God*, i. e. a peculiar instrument in God's hand for promoting our Lord's kingdom and interest in all the parts of the world he has been in. His success in the conversion of sinners, and revival of saints, is his peculiarity, and is indeed his Master's credential. For the Lord's sake, beware of fasting for strife and debate. Allow me to ask you, if common prudence, I had almost said common sense, does not dictate Gamaliel's advice (Acts v. 38, 39.) to be a good one in this case?"

In taking a review of the whole of these proceedings, after the lapse of nearly a century, when it may be supposed that party feelings have in a great measure subsided, we are enabled to form a more calm and dispassionate judgment of events, than they did who lived in the heyday of contention; and were I, taking such a review, to attempt a vindication of the harsh and unwarrantable language which the Presbytery employed with regard to Mr. Whitefield, and with regard to the work that took place at Cambuslang, at Kilsyth, and in other parts of the country, I would act in opposition to the decided convictions of my own mind. Mr. Whitefield, though not

without his failings, was undoubtedly a man of great piety, and most devoted, as well as persevering in his efforts to benefit the souls of men ; all the energies both of his mind and body (and these were of no ordinary kind), were consecrated by him to the service of his Divine Master. Few men have ever appeared in any church that were more honoured of God in the conversion of sinners than he was. His views of the fundamental articles of the Christian faith were strictly orthodox ; and the doctrines of free grace occupied a prominent place in his ministrations. There was certainly a considerable tinge of enthusiasm about his character, but it was all employed by him in a good cause ; and the mere circumstance of his entertaining different views from the Presbytery, on the subject of church government, and on other minor points, by no means warranted the strong censorious language that was employed concerning him. He was willing to have co-operated with the Presbytery, provided they had been willing to co-operate with him, on the ground that each should be permitted to hold his own opinions on these points ; and when they found that they could not co-operate with him on the ground proposed, they ought to have left him to do all the good in his power, without any interference on their part.

Again, with regard to the work at Cambuslang, Kilsyth, and other places, if we are to condemn it as the work of Satan, and altogether a delusion, this would be to run in the face of a mass of evidence adduced by the most respectable and pious persons, that a great religious revival did take place in the circumstances above-mentioned ; and if we are to reject the unvarnished accounts which these persons give, with the facts which they adduce in support of them, I know not by what evidence it will be possible to establish the truth of a religious revival having taken place at any time. That there might be a good deal of extravagance, and hypocrisy, and enthusiasm, connected with the events above narrated, may readily enough be admitted ; for where is the period of great religious excitement that is without them ? Instances of these pernicious qualities are to be found less or more in all religious revivals. Even at the commencement of Christianity itself these things were not wanting. Amongst the number of those who *professed* to have experienced the work of grace upon their hearts, there were persons who had the form of godliness, but denied the power thereof ; whose conduct disgraced the cause which they pretended to support ; who were "spots in their feasts of charity." With regard to the bodily agitations, the convulsions and *outcryings*, which appear to have prevailed to a considerable extent among the people in the places above-mentioned, it must be admitted, that these are not necessarily con-

nected with the process of conversion; at the same time, it is easy to conceive how such effects may be produced by strong religious excitement operating upon a nervous frame. But even supposing that these agitations were in many instances the effects of mere natural causes, and in others the *actings* of hypocrisy to impose the more easily upon spectators, still, after all these abatements and allowances are made, there remains satisfactory evidence of much spiritual good having been done. Men of intelligence and piety, who had the best opportunities of acquiring information on the subject in dispute, and who were well-qualified to form an opinion upon it, unite in testifying that many individuals, both at Cambuslang and in other districts of the country, gave decided indication, by the holiness of their lives, that they had undergone a saving change. Nor were the serious impressions thus produced evanescent; for though, as might have been expected, there were some who returned to their former sinful practices, the great mass appear to have kept steady in their Christian profession till the end of their lives.

Mr. M'Culloch, in a letter addressed to his friend Mr. Robe in 1751, *nine years* after the religious awakening had taken place, gives the following account of the exemplary Christian conduct of those who had been the subjects of this revival:—

“By the practice of justice and charity, relative duties, public-spiritedness, humility, meekness, patience, and a close and diligent attendance on gospel ordinances, heavenly-mindedness, watchfulness against all sins, especially those sins that used formerly easily to beset them, &c. they adorn the doctrines of God our Saviour, glorify their heavenly Father, and excite others to do so on their account.

“Those of them that were cursers and swearers have laid aside that language of hell, and have learned much of the language of heaven, and to speak with holy awe of God, and things divine. Such of them as used to be often out in taverns, drinking and playing at cards, &c. till very late, or morning-hours rather, for these nine years past shun all occasions of that kind, and keep at home at night, spending the night in Christian conference, things profitable for their families, and in secret and family devotion.

“The formerly drunken or tippling sot, that used to lie a-bed till eight or nine in the morning, till he slept out last night's drunkenness, for these nine years gets up at three or four in the morning, and continues at reading his Bible and other good books, secret prayer, and meditation, &c. till seven or eight o'clock in the morning, when he calls his household together for family devotion; and does the like in the evening and at night.

"The formerly covetous, and worldly-minded, and selfish, have got a public spirit and zealous concern for promoting the kingdom and glory of Christ in the conversion and salvation of souls: and for this end, are careful not only to live inoffensively themselves, but usefully to others, so as all about them may be the better for them: they join cheerfully to their power, and some even beyond it, (so that I have sometimes seen it needful to check some of them for too large quotas or offers,) in collections for promoting the interests of religion, or for the relief of those in straits, in places near hand or far off: they carefully observe the times fixed for the concert in prayer, and joining at such times in earnest pleadings at a throne of grace for the spreading and success of the gospel, and the out-pouring of the Spirit from on high on the churches."\*

To call *that* a delusion, or a work of Satan, which produced such effects as these upon hundreds of individuals, is language which cannot be justified; and that the Associate Presbytery should, by a solemn deed, have called upon the congregations under their charge to fast and humble themselves in the sight of God, on account of such a work being carried on, is conduct which their historian will not attempt to vindicate. Instead of mourning, they ought to have rejoiced at hearing of a revival having, to a certain extent, taken place within the pale of a church from which, on account of its corruptions, they had withdrawn. To have admitted that such a revival had taken place, and to have rejoiced on account of it, would not have weakened one iota of the grounds on which the Secession was originally formed: if they acted under the impression that such an admission was inconsistent with their bearing testimony against the evils that prevailed in the National Church, it was a mistaken idea which they cherished. That they declared that to be a delusion, which they did not believe to be so, is a supposition which it would be highly uncharitable to make,—a supposition which would be completely at variance with the known piety and integrity of their characters: but their conduct in this matter adds one to the many instances, that already exist, of the judgments of even good men being strongly biassed by the particular circumstances in which they are placed.

\* Robe's Narrative, p. 313.

## CHAPTER V.

No lay elders in the Associate Presbytery for four years—The sessions of Kinclaven and Abernethy give in the first accessions—Thomas Watson and George Dron the first elders that were enrolled—Form of accession—Anomaly connected with the session of Perth—Petition from the congregation of Kinross for one of their elders to act as a member of Presbytery—Petition refused—Unusual modes of procedure in the Presbytery—Fund for the support of students of divinity—Philosophical class instituted—Mr. Robert Archibald appointed to take the charge of it—Succeeded by Mr. David Wilson—Rev. Andrew Arrot of Dunnichen accedes to the Presbytery—The Presbytery sends a preacher to Ireland—A petition from Pennsylvania for sermon—The granting of the petition delayed—No Preacher to send—The Presbytery publishes an Act concerning the Doctrine of Grace—Outline of the Act—The Presbytery resolves to renew the covenants—A Bond and Acknowledgment of Sins prepared—Mr. Nairn dissents—Dealings with Mr. Nairn—Mr. Nairn renounces his connexion with the Presbytery—Meeting of a committee at Kirkaldy—Mr. Nairn's obstreperous conduct—Presbytery's Answers to Mr. Nairn's Reasons of Dissent—The Presbytery engages in covenanting at Stirling—Covenanting declared to be the term of ministerial and Christian communion—Congregations required to covenant—The ceremony of covenanting described—Remarks on covenanting as a duty—The Presbytery constitute themselves into a Synod—First meeting of Synod held at Stirling in March 1745—A second mission undertaken to Ireland—The Secession introduced into London—Loyalty of the Seceders—Their conduct during the Rebellion in 1745—Church discipline inflicted on two Seceders for sinful compliance with the rebels.

**DURING** the early period of the Associate Presbytery's existence, the forms of its procedure differed, in some respects, from those which are now observed; and owing to peculiar circumstances, certain anomalies were sanctioned, which their successors in office will scarcely consider to have been consistent with strict ecclesiastical form. Several years elapsed, after the formation of the Presbytery, before the different sessions over which the ministers presided acceded to the Secession; and before, of course, elders were commissioned by the sessions to sit in the Presbytery. Some of the sessions were much longer in acceding than others: in some the act of accession was unanimous, while in others the elders were divided in opinion. The usual form in which the accession was made, was for the session to declare, by a regular deed, that they '*took up the Testimony*:' such was the technical phraseology of the times, implying that the person or persons, who made the declaration, approved of the grounds of the Secession from the Established Church, stated by the Presbytery in the Testimony which they had published.

For upwards of four years, the Presbytery consisted wholly of ministers, without a single lay elder being present with them, or taking any part in their deliberations. It was not till the 5th of January, 1737, that the name of any elder was inserted in the Presbytery roll. On that day formal accessions were made by the sessions of Abernethy and Kinclaven. As a specimen of the solemn manner in which these accessions were usually given, I extract from the Presbytery record the following document, which was presented from the session of Kinclaven:—

*“Kinclaven Manse, October 25, 1736.—Which day and place the session met, and after prayer by the minister, were present, &c. The session taking into their consideration the present lamentable condition of the Established Church of Scotland, that the General Assemblies thereof have restrained ministerial freedom in faithfulness in preaching, and the liberty of protesting against their decisions, however unlawful, and have ejected four ministers from their communion for refusing to give up with these valuable rights of the office-bearers of Zion's King; that gross errors and blasphemies have been vented by some members of the church, and yet no way duly censured, nor testified against, when the cause of truth came before the supreme judicatories, whereby the cause of truth is left bleeding in our streets; That as the heritage of God, for several years past, has been oppressed by intrusions into the ministry, the same continue still to be countenanced; and likewise considering that the Established Church have refused to make a faithful acknowledgment, to the glory of God, of our own iniquities and the iniquities of our fathers, and the session having heard read the causes of the Lord's wrath against this church and land, both in former and present times, drawn up by the ministers associated together, for the exercise of government and discipline in a presbyterial capacity, it was moved what should be the duty of this session in the present juncture; whereupon one was desired to pray, and after prayer, and long reasoning upon the said motion, the question was put,—Take up the Testimony contained in the above-mentioned causes of the Lord's wrath, and accede to the Presbytery of the ministers associated for the exercise of church government and discipline, or Not? It carried unanimously, Take up the Testimony contained in the above-mentioned causes of the Lord's wrath, in all the branches thereof; and they Did and hereby Do accede to the Presbytery of the ministers associated for the exercise of government and discipline; and upon a leet being made, Thomas Watson was chosen to attend the meetings of Presbytery for the ensuing half year.”*

Thomas Watson, elder from Kinclaven, and George Dron, elder from the session of Abernethy, were the first elders whose names were placed upon the Presbytery's roll.

On the 20th of December, 1737, the sessions of Perth and Abbotshall gave in each a declaration of secession from the judicatories of the Established Church. The declaration from Abbotshall was accepted, and the elder appointed by that session was enrolled a member of the Presbytery : but the declaration from Perth did not *prove satisfactory*, being expressed in too general terms, and the elder whom they had appointed (Provost Brown), being called in, and having had the sentence of Presbytery intimated to him, he declared his own approbation of the Testimony, and expressed also his sorrow for having formerly taken the oath of abjuration ; whereupon the Presbytery unanimously agreed to receive him into their society, and his name was added to the roll. In the month of April, 1742, the Presbytery appointed a committee to deal with the session of Perth, with the view of bringing them to a "more complete accession" to the Presbytery than they had yet given ; and, on the 12th of August, in the same year, the committee reported that this object had been accomplished. At this period, there were *two* sessions connected with the congregation of Perth, one belonging to the town and another to the country. This anomalous mode of government was tolerated for a number of years, until, at the request of the sessions themselves, they were united into one, the Presbytery declaring such a mode of government to be inconsistent with presbyterian principles.

Previous to this period, the Presbytery had given a decision on a question, which has been repeatedly agitated in the Secession court since, and which has been uniformly decided in the same way.\* The people of Kinross having presented (July, 1737,) a petition, craving leave to send an elder, who should be allowed to sit as a member of Presbytery, though they had no minister ordained amongst them, the prayer of their petition was refused, on the ground that it had been the practice of the presbyterian church since the Reformation, to permit an elder to sit only where there was a minister connected with the congregation, that thus there might always be a parity observed of lay and ministerial members in the church courts. Mr. Thomas Mair was appointed to converse with the elders of Kinross upon the subject ; and having met with them in a constituted session, the report which he gave from them was, that the motion did not originate with them,

\* Since the above was written, the United Associate Synod, at their meeting in Glasgow, October 1837, have declared that vacant congregations, as well as those that have ministers ordained amongst them, are entitled to send lay representatives to the church courts.

and that they did not wish to insist upon it, except in so far as the Presbytery might see meet.

Another part of the Presbytery's procedure, deserving of notice, was their conduct in reference to calls. Their preachers being few, and their vacant congregations numerous, they had generally lying on their table a number of petitions for moderations: and it was no unusual thing for them, when they met, to propose the two following votes:—"Grant any moderations at this meeting?"—and, "To what congregations shall they be granted?" Sometimes two, three, and even five moderations were granted at a single meeting, according to the number of their licentiates. When a call was presented from a congregation to be sustained, it occasionally happened, that a petition against the sustaining of the call was presented from another congregation, who pled that the Presbytery before sustaining the call, would give them an opportunity of calling the same individual; and, irregular though the procedure may appear, the Presbytery sometimes granted the prayer of such petitioners. When the congregation of Haddington gave a call to Mr. George Brown, commissioners from Perth, and also from Stitchell, appeared at the bar of the Presbytery, craving that they would delay sustaining the call, and, in the meantime, grant them a moderation with a view to the same individual. The Presbytery delayed sustaining the call from Haddington, granted the moderation to the people of Perth; and at a future meeting they determined that Mr. Brown should be ordained at Perth instead of Haddington.

The Presbytery, though in general sufficiently formal as to their mode of conducting business, yet were not at all scrupulous in dispensing with adherence to forms, in cases where the welfare of particular congregations was concerned. When a call was laid on the table, in the month of August, 1742, from the congregation of Jedburgh to the Rev. Mr. Thomson of Burntisland, without observing the usual formalities of summoning parties and hearing reasons, they laid aside the call, "on the ground of the present circumstances of Burntisland." When Mr. Andrew Clarkson was ordained at Knock in the neighbourhood of Linlithgow, members of the congregation were permitted to sign the call, on the day of ordination, in the presence of the Presbytery; and it was intimated that such as were not present that day would have an opportunity of signing it afterward in the presence of the session.

With the view of encouraging young men of piety and talents to enter upon the study of divinity, a fund was instituted, at an early period, from which pecuniary aid was given to such of the students as required it. The donation

given to each student varied according to circumstances; some received three pounds, some four, and others six. This fund was liberally supported by the infant societies connected with the Secession. In the course of two years upwards of one hundred and fifty pounds were collected; a sum which, when we consider the high value of money at that period, and the general poverty of those from whom it was collected, must be regarded as highly creditable to the Christian liberality of the community.\*

After the removal of the Divinity Hall to Abernethy, which took place, as has been already mentioned, when Mr. Moncrieff was appointed Professor in February 1742, a class for teaching philosophy was instituted in connexion with the Hall, and the charge of it was committed to one of the Students of Divinity. Mr. Robert Archibald, who was afterwards ordained at Haddington, taught it the first year; and after he was appointed to be taken on trials for licence, he was succeeded by Mr. David Wilson in 1743, who taught the class, with considerable approbation, till near the time of the division in the synod, when he resigned it. Mr. Wilson received six pounds out of the Presbytery fund, at his appointment; and, though it is not mentioned, yet it is probable that he received a small sum out of the fund yearly so long as he continued to teach. Each student was enjoined to pay him five shillings quarterly, and those who possessed the means were to pay him ten shillings. A committee of Presbytery was occasionally appointed to examine the students with regard to their attainments in philosophy; and at a subsequent period, after the Presbytery had formed itself into a synod, it was enacted, that all students, before being admitted into the philosophical class, should be carefully examined and recommended by the Presbyteries, in whose bounds they resided. Those young men, who had studied philosophy in any of the colleges or universities in Scotland, and who applied for admission to the study of divinity, were subjected to a rigid examination by the Presbytery, as to the soundness of their principles; for many of the teachers in the universities were not looked upon with a favourable eye at that period.

In the month of October, 1742, the Rev. Andrew Arrot,

\* In looking over the disbursements from this fund, the following item deserves to be extracted, as affording a correct specimen of the spirit of the times:—"Appoint the brethren to give out of the foresaid fund, in the interim, to Duncan M'Lachlan, Presbytery Officer, twenty-four pounds Scots, in regard that said Duncan is in great straits, being deprived of his living by the Magistrates of Stirling, because he refuses to serve the five elders who were sustained by the present judicatories as the only session of Stirling, in opposition to the lawful and right constitute session of that place."

minister of Dunnichen, renounced his connexion with the Establishment, and acceded to the Presbytery. The reasons which induced him to take this step, and which were stated at full length in a paper presented to the Presbytery, were much the same as those to which a reference has already been made in similar documents. During this and the preceding year, the Presbytery ordained twelve ministers, and their small phalanx, consisting originally of *four*, had now increased to twenty.\*

Besides supplying their numerous vacancies at home, they commenced, this year, a course of missionary exertion, with a view to supply the spiritual necessities of those, who, in other countries, were destitute of the gospel. So far back as the year 1736, an application had been made to them from a number of families in Lisburn, in Ireland, requesting that they would send over a person to labour amongst them; but at that time the request could not be complied with, as the Presbytery had no preachers to send. At their meeting in October, in the present year, a similar application was made to them from Templepatrick and some of the adjacent places, in the country of Antrim; and Mr. Gavin Beugo was appointed on a mission to Ireland for several months. In the course of this year, also, the Presbytery received a letter from Londonderry, Chester, state of Pennsylvania, in America, containing an urgent request that they would send over either an ordained minister or a probationer to labour amongst the inhabitants of that district; and a promise was given that all the necessary charges of the mission would be defrayed. The demands, however, made upon the Presbytery for supplying the necessitous districts in their own immediate neighbourhood, were so numerous and so urgent, that they had it not yet in their power to send any of their preachers across the Atlantic. They returned a friendly reply to the American letter, but deferred, for a season, sending a labourer to that part of the vineyard.

The Presbytery conceiving that the proceedings of the Assembly in 1717, with regard to Professor Simson's case, and also the acts which had been passed in 1720 and 1722, respecting the Marrow Controversy, had proved most inju-

\* The following were the ministers connected with the Associate Presbytery at the close of the year 1742:—Messrs. Ebenezer Erskine, Stirling; Alexander Moncrieff, Abernethy; Ralph Erskine, Dunfermline; James Fisher, Glasgow; James Thomson, Burntisland; Thomas Nairn, Abbotshall; Thomas Mair, Orwell; Adam Gib, Edinburgh; James Mair, Linton; David Smyton, Kilmaurs; William Hutton, Stow; Andrew Clarkson, Craigmaitlen; John Cleland, Balfroun; George Brown, Perth; William Campbell, Ceres; Thomas Ballantyne, Sanquhar; David Horn, Cambusmethan; Patrick Mathew, Midholm; James Scot, Gatheshaw; and Andrew Arrot, Dunnichen.

rious to the interests of gospel truth, resolved to take particular notice of these proceedings; and at an early period (in 1738) they had appointed a committee to prepare an assertory act, with a view to vindicate the doctrine of free grace, and to counteract the pernicious errors which were then so prevalent. After a considerable delay, occasioned by the multiplicity of concerns which occupied the attention of the Presbytery, a long and elaborate act was prepared, entitled an "Act of the Associate Presbytery concerning the doctrine of grace;" and after several meetings had been spent in mature deliberation upon the different statements which it contained, the Presbytery gave it their final sanction upon the 21st of October, 1742. This act contains a great mass of excellent matter; but it partakes of the fault of most of the official documents of that period,—it is too prolix, and withal somewhat involved in its statements. The publication of it, however, was a seasonable appearance on behalf of the truth; and though some of the positions contained in it may be objected to, as stated in too strong terms, yet as the views which it gives of the fundamental doctrines of the gospel, and especially of the mode of a sinner's salvation by grace, to the utter exclusion of human merit, are most scriptural, it must have had a beneficial effect in checking the progress of Arminianism. The following statement, taken from the preamble of the act, will show what was the general object which the Presbytery had in view in publishing it:—"In zeal for the glory of God, and the vindication of his truth, as also for contributing what in them lies, through grace, to put a stop to the spreading of legal and Arminian doctrine, wherewith the whole land is like to be overflown, to the ruin of many precious souls, who, by the Lord's blessing upon this mean of his appointment, may come to be established in the truth, as it is in Jesus, the Associate Presbytery did, and hereby do, judge it their duty, according to the powers given them by the Lord Jesus Christ as a judicatory of his house, to assert the truth from the holy Scriptures, and our standards of doctrine, concerning the *free grace* of God in the salvation of mankind lost, in opposition to the corrupt doctrine vented in some acts of Assemblies, darkening and enervating the same. And to this they reckon themselves the more warranted and obliged, in regard that the salvation of sinners is manifestly endangered by errors and mistakes anent the nature of truth, and God's gift of eternal life to us, the complete satisfaction of the glorious Surety, the absolute freedom of the covenant of grace, and other important doctrines which are opposed and subverted by the acts of Assembly after-mentioned."

In this act, the Presbytery entered fully into a vindication of those doctrines taught by the Marrow-men, which the Assembly thought proper, first to misrepresent, and then to condemn. As the questions discussed in the act concerning the doctrine of grace have of late been revived, and are at present exciting considerable attention in the religious world; and as the acts of Assembly passed in 1720 and 1722, have lately been employed as tests of orthodoxy, and made use of for the purpose of expelling labourers from the pale of the Establishment, it will not be foreign to the object of this work, to give a short account of the sentiments which the first Seceders entertained concerning these acts of Assembly, and concerning the doctrines which they condemned.

In considering the acts of Assembly now mentioned, the first point noticed by the Presbytery, is the "*injury done to the doctrine of grace, under the head of universal atonement and pardon.*" One of the charges brought against the supporters of the Marrow by the Assembly, was countenancing the doctrine of *universal redemption as to purchase*. This doctrine the Presbytery declare they reject and condemn as contrary to the scriptures, and places of the Confession and Larger Catechism quoted by the Assembly; and they farther declare, that no such doctrine is taught in the Marrow. The author, they say, has expressly declared himself for a *particular redemption and representation*, as he plainly teaches, through the whole of his book, that Christ represented and suffered for none but the elect; and seeing that the passages quoted from the Marrow cannot be interpreted as favouring the doctrine of universal redemption, they consider that the sentence of the Assembly must be intended as condemnatory of something else. On this subject they add, "It will be obvious, from the tenor and strain of the Assembly's act, that, under the misapplied title of universal redemption as to *purchase*, they condemn the universal and unlimited offer of Christ unto mankind-sinners *as such*. For though the Assembly 1722 seems to own, that the revelation of the divine will in the word affords a warrant to offer Christ unto all, and a warrant for all to receive him, yet they can own that warrant only in a consistency with their notion of faith; that is, a warrant only for the *elect*, or those who are *so and so qualified* to receive Christ. But they do not own that mankind sinners, *as such*, however sinful and miserable, have any such warrant. And consequently, the revelation of the divine will in the word, making such a gift of Christ to the world of mankind-sinners, as affords a warrant to offer Christ unto all without exception, or to preach the gospel to every creature, and a warrant for all to receive him; and the sovereign grace

that has made this grant or deed of gift, not to devils but to men,—are encroached upon, and injured by the acts of both Assemblies 1720 and 1722.”

The Presbytery then state what their own views are of this doctrine; and the sentiments which they maintain concerning it are, “that though the purchase and application of redemption be peculiar to the *elect*, yet the warrant to receive Christ is common to *all*, as they are sinful men and women of Adam’s family. The *gift* of Christ mentioned in Scripture, is not to be understood of a giving unto *possession*, which is peculiar to them only who believe. But is a giving by way of *offer*, whereupon one *may* take possession; or such a giving as warrants a man to believe or receive the gift, and therefore must be *before* actual receiving: Even as the manna behoved to be given or rained down before it could be tasted or fed upon. The persons to whom this grant and offer is made are not the *elect* only, but mankind considered *as lost*. For the record of God being such a thing as warrants *all* to believe on the Son of God, it is evident that it can be no such warrant to tell men that God hath given eternal life to the elect: As the offering of a gift to a certain select company, can never be a warrant for all men to receive or take possession of it.”

The *second* point noticed by the Presbytery concerning the acts of the Assembly 1720 and 1722, is the injury done by them to the doctrine of grace, *concerning the nature of faith*. The Assembly condemned the author of the Marrow for asserting that the justifying act of saving faith is, “a man’s being persuaded that Christ is *his*, and that *he* shall have life and salvation by him; and that whatsoever Christ did for the redemption of mankind, he did it *for him*.” This definition of saving faith the Presbytery adopt, as being the one which they consider most agreeable to Scripture and the standards of the church; while they condemn as vague and unsatisfactory the following account which the Assembly give of faith, viz.: —“That a belief and persuasion of the mercy of God in Christ, and of Christ’s ability and willingness to save all that come unto him, is necessary unto justifying faith.” Such a persuasion as this, the Presbytery declare, may be possessed by devils and reprobates, and cannot, therefore, constitute justifying faith. With regard to those passages which the Assembly adduce from Scripture, and from the Confession and the Larger Catechism, to show that assurance is not of the essence of faith, the Presbytery remark, that these passages apply to the *assurance of faith* or reflection (whereby believers are certainly assured, that they are in a state of grace, upon the evidence of those marks which the Lord hath given of his own work in the soul), and to the *assurance* which is

in *faith*, in the direct act thereof, and which is founded upon the word only. They add, "The question is not here concerning the *present state* of the *person*, which he is called to examine, according to the rules of God's word; but the question is concerning the *nature* of that *faith* which all the hearers of the gospel are called unto, and which the Scripture plainly describes to be a *believing* in God, and a *trusting* in his salvation, a *receiving* of Christ, a believing the record that God hath given to us eternal life; that he will be our God, and that we shall be his people; and so calling him *our* Father, *our* Husband, *our* God, upon the warrant of his own word of grace. There is a great difference between the *assurance of our state of grace*, and the *assurance of the promise of salvation*; or an assured faith of righteousness and salvation in Christ Jesus, as held forth to every sinner to whom the gospel comes, to be received and applied by them for *their own* benefit. The assurance spoken of in the articles of our Confession of Faith, and Catechism cited by the Assembly, is an assurance that the faith which *we have* is indeed the faith of God's elect, or that we are *already in a gracious state*; and a believer may wait long before he obtain this assurance, according to our Confession and Catechisms; yet this says nothing against a man's being persuaded that Christ is *his*, as held out, and made over in the promises unto him. From all which it follows, that these passages of Scripture and our standards do by no means condemn the assurance which is in the *direct act* of faith, or the *appropriating* persuasion of faith, corresponding to the gift of Christ in the gospel." "Upon the whole, the Assembly, by condemning the above description of faith, have both condemned the Scripture account of the true nature of faith, and also the Scriptural *order* in which faith appropriates or closes with its object. For the first thing to be believed, or to be persuaded of, upon the grant that God has made of Christ unto mankind-sinners in the word, is, that *Christ is ours*: Upon which there will follow, according to the measure of faith, a persuasion that *we shall have life and salvation by him*, and that *whatsoever he did for the redemption of mankind, he did it for us*."

The *third* point which the Presbytery notice, in reference to the acts of the Assembly 1720 and 1722, is the injury done by these acts to the doctrine of grace, in *ascribing to good works a casual influence upon our eternal salvation*. In these acts the Assembly enjoin ministers to preach the doctrine of the *necessity of a holy life, in order to the obtaining of everlasting happiness*. And they assert, that it is of dangerous tendency to teach, "That the law acknowledges no works for obtaining salvation, but such as found a *title* to it before the

Lord; whereas (say they,) the law requires good works in order to the *obtaining salvation*, though they do not found a title to it."

Concerning these statements, the Presbytery observe—  
 "The plain scope and tendency of all this, is to countenance and pave the way for the Arminian and Baxterian doctrine, of the gospel being a new, proper preceptive *law*, with sanction, —binding to faith, repentance, and other duties which are consequential to the entrance of sin and the revelation of the grace of God in the gospel; our personal obedience to which is necessary for obtaining everlasting happiness; for, though the Assembly owns that the righteousness of Christ founds our *title*, yet, according to them, we ourselves are to work for the *possession*." "It cannot but be matter of the deepest humiliation to all the true lovers of Zion, that ever such doctrine should be inculcated by the authority of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland, whereby so wide a door is opened to Arminian and Socinian errors, which, like a flood, have overflowed this church and land. Nor will it vindicate the Assembly, that they speak of obtaining the *enjoyment* and *possession* of everlasting happiness by a holy life; but not a *right* and *title* to it, which they allow that all justified persons have already attained. For,

"1. The condemned passages of the Marrow, on this head, speak not of salvation *completed*, or everlasting happiness in heaven, but of salvation *commenced*, or begun on earth; and many places of Scripture speak, as the author does, of salvation *obtained already*, in this life. Now, surely, we hold our *possession* of this begun salvation, not by *our works*, or holy life, but by *grace*, as it reigns through the righteousness of Jesus Christ unto eternal life. While the Assembly's restricting the term *salvation*, unto the *complete* enjoyment of salvation, is plainly for the sake of this dangerous principle, that though our faith and good works are not meritorious, or the cause of our *justification*, yet they are the cause of our *eternal salvation*, a federal and conditional mean thereof.

"2. Whereas the foresaid act of Assembly declares, that the obtaining of everlasting happiness is meant of obtaining the *enjoyment* and *possession* thereof, and not of a *right* and *title* thereto: it will follow, in a consistency with this act, that it is sound doctrine to teach, that we obtain the *right* to heaven by *Christ's* doing and obedience; but we obtain the *possession* of it by *our own* doing, or personal holiness. But the Scripture asserts, that not only the *right* and *title*, but also the *possession*, both the begun and complete possession, are purchased and obtained by the blood of Christ; though holiness, being a great part of that salvation whereof believers are

here possessed, is also necessarily connected with, and preparative unto, the full possession of eternal life hereafter. And how strange would it be in heaven to say, though we cannot boast that we have obtained a *right* to heaven, yet we have obtained the *possession* of it by our holy life. Our title to this salvation we now enjoy, was obtained by *Christ's* obedience, but *possession* of it was obtained by *our own* obedience."

While the Presbytery make these statements, they, at the same time, cordially acknowledge the necessity of holiness and good works, in their own place. They maintain that they are *necessary*, as an acknowledgment of God's sovereignty, and in obedience to his command, as being the end of our election, redemption, and effectual calling, as a part of that salvation which is begun here, and perfected hereafter,—as being expressions of our gratitude, and as being a special design of word and ordinances; and, finally, they are necessary for making our calling and election sure.

The Presbytery, after vindicating the doctrine of the *grace of God* from the injuries done to it by the acts of Assembly 1720 and 1722, show, in the concluding part of their act, that the holy law, as a *rule of duty*, is still obligatory under the gospel, and that the incitements to obedience which the gospel yields, are stronger and more powerful than any thing which the law itself, abstractly considered, can afford. In this part of the act, they show that the leading principle of obedience to the law, is faith in Jesus Christ; that the motive from which evangelical obedience proceeds, is the consideration of the matchless love and mercy of God, manifested in Christ; that this obedience is influenced by holy affections, such as love, delight, filial fear, and the like, and that it is performed with a view to promote the honour of Christ, and the glory of God.

Such is an outline of the act concerning the doctrine of grace, which the Presbytery published, to arrest the progress of Arminianism, on the one hand, and to guard their people against turning the grace of God into licentiousness, on the other; and there is reason to believe that the publication of it was blessed for accomplishing both of these purposes. Whatever may be the opinion entertained concerning the Marrow doctrines, which are avowedly defended in this document, it is impossible not to admire the zeal which these good men displayed in the vindication of the truth. Tremblingly alive to every thing that affected the interests of godliness, and the honour of their Redeemer, the grand object which they kept steadily in view, was maintaining, pure and uncorrupted, the truth as it is in Jesus. *Grace reigning through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ*, was their darling theme,—a theme which warmed their affections, which employed their

pens, which gave life and energy to their preaching, and to the frequent publication of which they were indebted, more than to any thing else, for the great success which attended their ministrations among the people.

At the same meeting at which they sanctioned the above act, the Presbytery agreed to engage in a work, to which they, in common with the great mass of the Scottish clergy, attached much importance, viz. "Renewing the Covenants." This work had, for a considerable period, been neglected in Scotland, and the Presbytery regarded the neglect of it as one chief cause of the divine displeasure; they also expected that the revival of it would be a mean of bringing about the Reformation which they so ardently desired. That they might engage in this work with all due solemnity, and in a manner suited to their present circumstances, they had appointed a committee to prepare a bond or covenant, which was to be sworn to, and subscribed by all the members; and, imitating the practice which had been observed during the covenanting periods, in Scotland, it was agreed that there should be prefixed to the bond an acknowledgment of sins. A draught of both of these was presented to the Presbytery, at their meeting on the 21st of October, under the title of "*Act of the Associate Presbytery, for renewing the National Covenant of Scotland, and the Solemn League and Covenant of the three nations; in a way and manner agreeable to our present situation and circumstances in this period.*"

This draught was approved of by all the members present, with the exception of Mr. Nairn, who, having adopted the views of the old dissenters, in relation to civil government, objected to the sentiments contained in the following paragraph, of the acknowledgment of sins, wherein the Presbytery bewail, on the one hand, the sentiments of those who impugn the yielding of subjection to the present civil authority of the country, in lawful commands; and, on the other, the equally dangerous opinion of those who inculcate the lawfulness of propagating religion by offensive arms:—"We desire to be humbled for the dangerous extreme that some have gone into, of impugning the present civil authority over these nations, and subjection thereunto in lawful commands, on account of the want of those qualifications which magistrates ought to have, according to the word of God and our covenants, even though they allow us in the free exercise of our religion, and are not manifestly unhinging the liberties of the kingdom,—an opinion and practice contrary to the plain tenor of Scripture, and to the known principles of this church, in her confession and covenants, and of all other reformed churches; and that some few carry their zeal against the defections and evils of the times,

to the dangerous extreme of espousing principles in favour of propagating religion by offensive arms, quite contrary to that disposition which ought to be in all the professed followers of Christ, who came not to destroy men's lives, but to save them." Against the adopting of this paragraph, Mr. Nairn offered to dissent, as the views which he entertained on these points differed from those of his brethren; but the Presbytery prevailed upon him to delay taking this step till their next meeting, with the understanding that he would then have an opportunity of entering his dissent, if his sentiments remained unchanged; and, in the mean time, all the members were to be furnished with copies of the bond and acknowledgment of sins, that the same might be maturely considered by them, and that they might be prepared to state their difficulties, should any occur to them before next meeting.

When the Presbytery met at Stirling, on the 22d of December, Mr. Nairn brought the subject of his dissent again before the court; and, after an unsuccessful attempt had been made to remove his objections, at an extrajudicial conference which the brethren held with him, the dissent was received, but the farther consideration of it was deferred till a future meeting. The business was again resumed, at Edinburgh, on the 3d of February, in the following year. Besides Mr. Nairn, two of the brethren, Messrs. Moncrieff and Campbell, objected to the above paragraph being retained in the acknowledgment of sins, on the ground that the cognizance of civil affairs belongs not to a church judicatory; and, as the Presbytery had already declared that it was not proper to swear civil allegiance in an oath imposed only by the church; so, if the sinfulness of opposing the civil magistrate in his just rights were confessed in the acknowledgment of sins, upon which the bond reduplicated, this would be equivalent to a blending of civil and ecclesiastical matters in the oath of God. In compliance with the suggestions of these brethren, the paragraph containing the statements above recorded, was withdrawn from the confession of sins, and made the subject of a separate act; and, as Mr. Nairn, in his reasons of dissent, had advanced sentiments which, in the opinion of the Presbytery, were subversive of civil magistracy, the Presbytery resolved that, unless he retracted these principles, they would proceed against him according to the rules of the church.

This resolution of the Presbytery being intimated to Mr. Nairn, he craved that it might be marked, that the sentiments which he held on the points at issue, were the same as those entertained by the old dissenters; that he could not conscientiously approve of the condemnation of these sentiments by the Presbytery; that he was of opinion that the mode adopted for re-

newing the covenants should be the same as that which was pursued by the covenanters, when they engaged in a similar work, at Auchensauigh, near Douglas, in July 1712; and, finally, that if the Presbytery adhered to the mode pointed out in their present act, it could not be styled a *renewing* of the covenants, but would be the imposition of quite a different oath. When Mr. Nairn found that his brethren, so far from acquiescing in his views, were resolved, that he should either retract his anti-government principles, or be subjected to the censures of the church, he laid on the Presbytery's table a paper of secession and appeal to the first faithful reforming judicatory, and then withdrew. In this paper he declared his adherence to his former reasons of dissent; which were, first, that the Associate Presbytery's bond for renewing the covenants was not the same in words with that sworn by our ancestors, and was not therefore a renovation of these covenants, but an imposition upon the people of a new covenant; and, secondly, that the civil part of the covenant was altogether omitted, which, he insinuated, was done from a consciousness that the acknowledging of the present civil government was inconsistent with our ancient covenants.

Mr. Nairn having thus renounced the authority of the Presbytery, a committee was appointed to meet at Kirkaldy, that they might prepare an overture concerning the whole affair. On the day appointed for their meeting, the committee found that the doors of the church were locked against them, by some of Mr. Nairn's friends; but having, after some delay, procured admission by means of that portion of the congregation who were dissatisfied with Mr. Nairn's conduct, they spent some time in prayer, and then proceeded to consider what course ought to be pursued in the business which had called them together. In the midst of their deliberations, Mr. Nairn entered the church, mounted the pulpit, and, addressing himself in angry and reproachful terms to the members of committee, summoned them to appear before the judgment-seat of the great God to answer for their conduct. The committee prudently refrained from making any reply, considering it altogether in vain to attempt reasoning with a person apparently so much under the influence of irritation: whereupon Mr. Nairn withdrew. The committee spent some time in conversation with the people on those points, concerning which Mr. Nairn had expressed himself dissatisfied with the conduct of the Presbytery; and endeavoured to show them the erroneous nature of the opinions which he maintained. But, as it was not the congregation alone that was concerned in this matter, the committee appointed some of their number to prepare answers to Mr. Nairn's papers, which he had given in to the

Presbytery; that, by the publication of them, the topics in dispute might be set in a clear light; and, at the same time, a public declaration made of the Presbytery's principles concerning civil government.\*

The Presbytery, at a subsequent meeting, approved of a draught of the answers, which was submitted to them by their committee; and, after two weeks had been spent by them at Stirling, in considering a declaration and defence of their principles with respect to civil government, the whole was formally sanctioned by them, on the 29th of September, 1743, and a short while after published under the title of *Answers by the Associate Presbytery, to Reasons of Dissent and Secession, given in to them by the Rev. Thomas Nairn; together with a Declaration and Defence of the Associate Presbytery's principles, ament the present civil government.* In the first part of this document, the Presbytery endeavour to show, that the mode which Mr. Nairn wished them to adopt, in renewing the covenants, is unreasonable, impracticable, and unprecedented in the church; and they vindicate themselves against the charge of attempting any innovation upon the example which had been set them, in this respect, by the Scottish Reformers. In the second part, they maintain the affirmative side of the following question, "Ought we not to acknowledge the civil authority of the government of these nations, and to yield subjection thereunto in lawful commands?"

In answering this question in the affirmative, the Presbytery maintained it as a principle founded on the word of God, and agreeable to the confessions of all the reformed churches, "That, as the defection of a nation from a reformation previously attained, doth not deprive them of a right to choose civil magistrates for themselves; and that as subjection to them, and obedience to their lawful commands, continues a duty incumbent upon the minority who adhere to the covenanted reformation: so also, that these civil rights of the nation, and their magistrates, did neither arise from, nor were innovated by the reformation once attained. True religion is not only the church's blessing, but her very substance; so that true religion and a true church cannot be divided. Now, if true religion became a part of the civil constitution, it inevitably follows, that the church became a part of the state; which doctrine, as it is absurd in itself, so it lays a plain foundation for erastianism, overturning the distinction betwixt the kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the kingdoms of this world. Moreover, if the true religion (which is spiritual and supernatural), became a part of the civil constitution, then it could no longer

\* Brown's MS.

remain a *civil*, but became a *religious*, a spiritual, a supernatural constitution."

The Presbytery further maintained that "the public good of outward and common order, in all reasonable society, unto the glory of God, is the great and only end which those invested with magistracy can propose, in a sole respect unto that office. And as, in prosecuting this end civilly, according to their office, it is only over men's good and evil works that they can have any inspection, so it is only over these which they must needs take cognizance, for the said public good; while, at the same time, their doing so must be in such a manner, and proceed so far alienarly, as is requisite for that end, without assuming any lordship immediately over men's consciences, or making any encroachment upon the special privileges and business of the church; and, moreover, as the whole institution and end of their office are cut by, and lie within the compass of, natural principles, it were absurd to suppose that there could or ought to be any exercise thereof towards its end in the foresaid circumstances, but what can be argued for and defended from natural principles; as indeed there is nothing especially allotted and allowed unto magistrates, by the word of God, and the confessions of the reformed churches, but what can be so." \*

The Presbytery resumed their preparations for renewing the covenants, which had been interrupted by their dispute with Mr. Nairn. In addition to the acknowledgment of sins, and the bond which had already been prepared, it was thought proper that there should be a confession of sins, and a bond peculiar to the ministry. A draught of these was laid before the Presbytery on the 3d of November, and formally sanctioned by them; and all the necessary arrangements being completed, they appointed a meeting to be held at Stirling, in the month of December, when they resolved to engage in the work of covenanting. This meeting took place on Wednesday the 28th of the month. The Tuesday preceding was observed as a day of fasting and humiliation, when the brethren engaged in devotional exercises, and made a solemn confession of their sins, and pledged themselves to a more faithful and diligent performance of the duties connected with their ministry. Wednesday, which was the day appointed for the renewing of the covenants, was also set apart as a day of fasting and humiliation. The services of the day were commenced by Mr. Ebenezer Erskine preaching a sermon from Isaiah xxii. 24, "And they shall hang upon him all the glory of his father's house," &c. Mr. Fisher then offered up prayer to God, and gave

\* Gib's Display, vol. i. p. 274 and 311.

out a psalm : after which the National Covenant, the Solemn League and Covenant, the Acknowledgment of Sins, and the Engagement to duties, or bond which the Presbytery had prepared, were read. Mr. Thomas Mair next prayed for the divine blessing to rest upon them in the solemn work in which they were engaged. The following bond was then read by Mr. Ebenezer Erskine, while all the ministers stood, and with hands uplifted to heaven, in the presence of a large congregation, publicly entered into covenant with the Lord God of their fathers :—

“ We all, and every one of us, though sensible of the deceitfulness and unbelief of our own hearts, and however frequently perplexed with doubts and fears anent our actual believing, yet desiring to essay, in the Lord’s strength, and in obedience to his command, to glorify God, by believing his word of grace contained in his covenant of promise, and in the faith of his promise, do devote ourselves unto the Lord in a covenant of duty ; We do, with our hands lifted up to the most high God, hereby profess, and before God, angels, and men, solemnly declare, that, through the grace of God, and according to the measure of his grace given unto us, we do, with our whole hearts, take hold of the Lord Jesus Christ as the only propitiation for our sins ; his *Righteousness* as the only foundation of our access to, and acceptance with God ; his *Covenant* of free and rich promises as our only charter for the heavenly inheritance ; his *Word* for our perfect and only rule of faith and practice ; his *Spirit* for our alone guide to lead us unto all truth revealed in his holy word, unto which nothing at any time is to be added, whether by new revelations of the Spirit or traditions of men. We avouch the Lord to be *our* God. And in the strength of his promised grace, we *promise* and *swear*, by the great name of the Lord our God, that we shall walk in his way, keep his judgments and commandments, and hearken to his voice : And particularly, that we shall, by the Lord’s grace, continue and abide in the profession, faith, and obedience of the foresaid true and reformed religion, in doctrine, worship, presbyterial church government and discipline : and that we shall, according to our several stations, places, and callings, contend and testify against all contrary evils, errors, and corruptions ; particularly, popery, prelacy, deism, arianism, arminianism, and every error subversive of the doctrine of grace ; as also independency, latitudinarian tenets, and the other evils named in the above confession of sins.

“ In like manner we *promise* and *swear*, that, by all means which are lawful and warrantable for us, according to the word of God, the approved and received standards of this church, and our known principles, we shall, in our several stations and

callings, endeavour the reformation of religion in England and Ireland ; in doctrine, worship, discipline, and government, according to the word of God : And to promote and advance our covenanted conjunction, and uniformity in religion ; Confession of faith, and Catechisms, Form of Church-government, and Directory for Worship, as these were received by this church.

“ And in regard we are taught by the word of God, and bound by our covenants, national and solemn league, to live together in the fear of God, and in love to one another, and to encourage one another in the work and cause of the Lord ; and that, denying all ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in the present world : Therefore, in a dependence on the Lord’s grace and strength, we in the same manner do *promise* and *swear*,—That we shall, in our several places and callings, encourage and strengthen one another’s hands in pursuing the end and design of this our solemn oath and covenant ; and that we shall endeavour a life and conversation becoming the gospel of Christ : And that, in our personal callings and particular families, we shall study to be good examples to one another of godliness and righteousness ; and of every duty that we owe to God and man : And that we shall not give up ourselves to a detestable indifferency and neutrality in the cause of God ; but, denying ourselves and our own things, we shall, above all things, seek the honour of God and the good of his cause and people : And that, through grace, forsaking the counsels of flesh and blood, and not leaning upon carnal confidences, we shall endeavour to depend upon the Lord, to walk by the rule of his word, and to hearken to his voice by his servants. In all which, professing our own weakness, we earnestly pray to God, who is the Father of mercies, through his Son Jesus Christ, to be merciful unto us ; and to enable us by the power of his Holy Spirit, that we may do our duty, unto the praise of his grace in the churches. Amen.”

After this solemn ceremony was finished, all the ministers present subscribed the bond, in presence of the congregation, in the following terms :—

“ We, under subscribing ministers, members of the Associate Presbytery, do subscribe the above bond with our hands ; at Stirling, this twentieth-and-eighth day of December, One thousand seven hundred and forty-three years : The said bond having been this day first solemnly sworn by us,”

“ EBENEZER ERSKINE, Minister at Stirling.  
RALPH ERSKINE, Minister at Dunfermline.  
JAMES THOMSON, Minister at Burntisland.  
ALEX. MONCRIEFF, Minister at Abernethy.

THOMAS MAIR, Minister at Orwell.  
 JAMES FISHER, Minister at Glasgow.  
 DAVID SMYTON, Minister at Kilmaurs.  
 WILLIAM HUTTON, Minister at Stow.  
 ADAM GIB, Minister at Edinburgh.  
 ANDREW CLARKSON, Minister at Craigmallen.  
 JOHN CLELAND, Minister at Balfroun.  
 GEORGE BROWN, Minister at Perth.  
 WILLIAM CAMPBELL, Minister at Ceres.  
 THOMAS BALLANTYNE, Minister at Sanquhar.  
 DAVID HORN, Minister at Cambusnethan.

Mr. Moncrieff then prayed, and the services of the day were concluded by Mr. Ralph Erskine preaching a sermon from Deuteronomy xxvi. 17, 18. "Thou hast avouched the Lord this day to be thy God," &c. Four members of Presbytery who were absent, on this occasion, viz. Mr. James Mair, Linton, Mr. Patrick Matthew, Midholm, Mr. John White, Dunse, and Mr. James Scot, Gateshaw, engaged in the same work at Falkirk, on the 14th of March ensuing, along with Mr. Henry Erskine, who had been ordained minister at Falkirk on the preceding day.\*

When the Presbytery met at Edinburgh, on the 14th day of February, 1744, an overture was laid before them, having for its object the fixing of the terms of ministerial and Christian communion. This overture, the Presbytery, after due deliberation, resolved to adopt. By it they enacted, "That the renovation of the National Covenant of Scotland, and the Solemn League and Covenant of the three Nations, in the manner now agreed upon and proposed by the Presbytery, shall be the term of ministerial communion with this Presbytery. And likewise of Christian communion, in the admission of people to sealing ordinances; secluding therefrom all opposers, contemners, and slighers of the said renovation of our covenants. And, moreover, as the Presbytery judge that much tenderness and lenity is to be used with the weakest of Christ's flock, who are lying open to light, and *minting* to come forward in the said cause; that they may not be, at first instance, secluded from sealing ordinances; So they agree that all such are to be secluded who, after deliberate pains taken for their information, with all due meekness and patience, shall be found, by the session or superior judicatories they are in subjection unto, to be neglecters and shifters of this important moral duty; or not to be, themselves, in the due use of means, for light and satisfaction thereanent."

\* Gib's Display, vol. i. p. 258.

This determination the Presbytery judged to be "agreeable to the word of God, the principles of this church, and the duty of the Lord's remnant in these lands." And they declared that "it is in reality a proper and steadfast adherence to the unerring rule of faith and manners, in opposition to the various deviations therefrom in our day, that is, by the said act, made *the term* of communion; and consequently no other term of communion is thereby imposed, than what the alone Lord of the conscience has prescribed. While the proposed renovation of our solemn covenants is not to be considered as *one particular duty*, made the term of communion, exclusively of, or preferably to others, but as the *general* and *seasonable* form of avouching *all the principles and duties* of our holy profession."\*

By another act, which was passed on the following day, the Presbytery appointed, "That the *Solemn Acknowledgment* of the public sins and breaches of our covenants shall be publicly joined in and made; whereupon these covenants shall be publicly sworn and subscribed in the bond, by all such (in settled and vacant congregations), as shall *willingly offer themselves* to the Lord, in this solemn work and duty:" And "that none shall be admitted to swear or subscribe the covenants, but such as have a competent measure of knowledge; are free of all known scandal, and have a conversation becoming the gospel; as these only can make a credible profession of willingly offering themselves to the Lord in this work."

Notwithstanding this appointment, it does not appear that almost any of the Secession congregations engaged in the work of covenanting, till several years after this period. The only exceptions to this statement were the congregations of Abernethy, Ceres, and Orwell; in these the appointment of the Presbytery, with regard to the renewing of the Covenants, was carried into effect during the year 1744; but the farther progress of the work was interrupted by the unhappy dispute, which commenced soon after, respecting the Burgess Oath.

As the work of *Renewing the Covenants*, to which our ancestors attached so much importance, has for a number of years gone into desuetude throughout the Secession, in all probability never to be revived, and as many of the present generation have never witnessed such a solemnity, it may be gratifying to some of my readers to peruse an account of the manner in which this work was usually performed.

When any congregation was about to engage in the work of covenanting, public intimation was given several weeks

\* Gib's Display, vol. i. p. 258.

beforehand; and frequent meetings of session were held, to converse with, and to receive such as offered themselves to join in the covenant. On the day appointed, which was usually the fast before the sacramental occasion, the minister of the congregation, assisted by several of his brethren, proceeded to the work in the following manner:—First, a sermon was preached, accompanied by the usual devotional exercises of prayer and praise; after which the minister took notice of the solemn work in which they were about to engage; and having prayed again, he read out the names of those who were to join, all of them being seated together; Secondly, the National Covenant, the Solemn League and Covenant, the Acknowledgment of sins, and the Engagement to Duties, or Bond, were read; all the ministers present reading a portion by turns, and each usually commencing with a short prayer; Thirdly, the minister who presided offered up a prayer of solemn confession and supplication, which was followed with praise. The oath of the bond was then administered, all the people standing up, and holding up their right hands; and an exhortation being addressed to the covenanters, the work was concluded with prayer and praise. If after these services there remained a sufficient portion of time, the bond was subscribed by those who had sworn; and the whole was followed by a sermon. But if, as was sometimes the case, there was not sufficient time, a sermon was preached on the following day, when an opportunity was given to subscribe the bond, in the presence of the minister and some of the session.\*

Much has been said and written concerning the work of covenanting. That in certain circumstances it may be a duty, is a position which few will be inclined to controvert. At the same time, much depends upon the nature of the covenant which we are required to subscribe, in order to determine whether our assenting to it be a duty or not. With regard to the first Scottish covenanters, their conduct in banding together admits of a satisfactory vindication, on the ground that their civil and religious liberties were completely at stake, and that they were contending for every thing dear to them, both as men and Christians. Their covenant, viewed as a league of mutual defence against “the popish and prelatical factions” with whom they had so frequently to struggle, demands our approbation; and if the framers and subscribers of it had limited themselves to this subject, their conduct would have been unexceptionable. But like all the parties, who rose and fell during the struggles of that event-

\* Gib's Display, vol. i. p. 251.

ful period, they made aggressions upon the religious liberties of others; they made use of the covenant as an instrument for enforcing a uniformity in matters of religion, by means of civil penalties; they violated the rights of conscience, when they made the subscribing of their bond the test of a person's holding any office, civil, military, or ecclesiastical. In this respect, their conduct deserves not praise but blame.

The members of any religious society have a right, if they shall think proper, to enter into an agreement or covenant, mutually pledging themselves that they will be faithful to their God, true to their religion, and that they will exert themselves by every lawful and scriptural method to promote their common cause; nay more, should it be a time of peril and alarm, in which they live, as was the case with our forefathers, they may pledge themselves to stand by one another, in defence of their lives and their liberty. This is all the length to which the work of covenanting can, at any time, be carried, in a consistency with reason or Scripture. And the necessity of the members of a religious communion engaging in it, to this extent, must be left to their own determination. But should the members of a church, after having framed and subscribed a covenant, attempt to impose it *by force* upon the consciences of others; should they supplicate "his majesty's high commissioner, and the honourable estates of parliament, by their authority to ratify and enjoin the same, under all civil pains;" should they declare "that there is no other face of Kirk, nor other face of religion," than what their covenant recognises, and procure an act of parliament ordaining magistrates, sheriffs, &c. "to search, apprehend, and punish all contraveners;" should they declare "that none shall be reputed as loyal and faithful subjects to our sovereign Lord or his authority, but be punishable as rebels and gainstanders of the same, who shall not give their confession, and make their profession of the said true religion;" and, finally, should they call upon the king to "be careful to root out of the empire all heretics and enemies to the true worship of God, who shall be convicted by the true Kirk of God of the foresaid crimes;" should the members of a church, under the laudable pretence of promoting the true religion, be guilty of such proceedings as these, they are stepping altogether out of their proper province; they are employing weapons in the service of God, which are abhorrent to the spirit of Christianity; and their covenant, designed as a bond of union among the fearers of God, they are converting into an instrument of cruel oppression. It was here that the Scottish Covenanters erred. It was not in their entering into a mutual confederation for the maintenance of their re-

ligion, and the protection of their lives that their error lay; to this they were shut up by the circumstances in which they were placed: but it was in the spirit of intolerance which characterized their proceedings, foolishly attempting to compel all, *vi et armis*, to come within the bond of their darling covenant, as if no person could be either a loyal subject or a true Christian, who preferred remaining without the mysterious circle.

The bond, which the Associate Presbytery prepared and subscribed, and in which they required all the congregations under their charge to join, breathes much less of the spirit of intolerance than either the National Covenant, or the Solemn League and Covenant. There is indeed little or nothing in it, to which any member of a presbyterian church may not cordially assent. It was drawn up by the Presbytery "*in a suitableness to their present circumstances;*" and they carefully avoid any allusion to civil pains and penalties being employed to enforce an agreement with their covenant. They appear to be designedly guarded on this subject; for, while they declare it to be their duty to contend against popery, prelacy, deism, arianism, &c. on the one hand, and to promote what they call "our covenanted conjunction and uniformity in religion," on the other; yet they intrench themselves within safe ground, when they promise and swear to do this, "*by all means which are lawful and warrantable for them, according to the word of God, the approved and received standards of their church,*" &c.

In one point, the Presbytery certainly grievously erred, and that was in enacting that the *renewing of the covenants* should be *the term* of ministerial and Christian communion, as if this constituted the only satisfactory evidence of a person being a genuine Christian, and as if no other marks of Christian character were entitled to any consideration. Into this fault they were led, from a desire to imitate, as closely as possible, the conduct of their reforming ancestors. The renovation of the covenants, so from being *the term*, ought not to have been a term of communion at all; because many good and conscientious persons were thereby subjected to the alternative either of giving their assent to statements, of the language of which they might not approve, and the truth of which they had no means of ascertaining, or of being excluded from the fellowship of the church altogether. The Presbytery, however, allowed the people a considerable latitude in exercising their judgment about this matter. It does not appear that public covenanting was rigorously enforced by them, as a term of communion; for, thirty years after their enactment had been in existence, a writer,\* who

\* Mr. Adam Gib.

had every opportunity of acquiring correct information on the subject, observes that, "so far as he knows, or can remember, there has been no instance of any of the people being kept back from sealing ordinances for not joining in covenanting work; while none of them have been found as is above expressed (that is, *neglecters* and *shifters* of the duty), but they have always been waited for, till willingly *offering themselves*, upon occasions of that solemn work, in their several congregations." I suppose, from this statement, that a great portion of the people must have ranked in that class, toward whom the Presbytery enjoined tenderness and lenity to be observed, on account of their "*lying open to light, and minting to come forward in the said cause.*"

The public business of the Associate Presbytery had now increased to such an extent, and, by the new settlements which had taken place amongst them, the members were removed to such distances from one another, that they found it very inconvenient to meet together in the same place so frequently as the despatch of business required; and, when they did meet, they were not able to overtake the one-half of the causes which came before them; so that they were often under the necessity of deferring from one meeting to another, the decision of important matters. They, therefore, resolved, on the 11th of October, 1744, to constitute themselves into a synod, to be styled "The Associate Synod," and to consist of three Presbyteries; these were the Presbyteries of Dunfermline, Glasgow, and Edinburgh. Each of these Presbyteries was appointed to hold its first meeting at the places now mentioned respectively (with the exception of the Presbytery of Glasgow, which was appointed to meet at Stirling), on the fourth Wednesday of November ensuing; and the first day of meeting was to be observed by all of them as a day of fasting and of religious exercises; and the whole were appointed to meet, for the first time, in the Associate Synod, at Stirling, on the first Tuesday of March, 1745.\*

\* The Associate Synod, when it was first formed, consisted of the following ministers, and of a lay elder from each of the congregations here mentioned; and they were classed in Presbyteries according to the following order:—

#### PRESBYTERY OF DUNFERMLINE.

Messrs. Ralph Erskine, Dunfermline.  
Andrew Arrot, Dunichen.  
James Thomson, Burntisland.  
Alex. Moncrieff, Abernethy.

Messrs. Thomas Mair, Orwell.  
William Campbell, Ceres.  
George Brown, Perth.  
John Erskine, Leslie.

The following congregations, which were then vacant, were placed under the charge of this Presbytery; viz. Kirkaldy, Kinkell, Muckhart, Kinclaven, Dundee, Montrose, Ross, Murray, and Buchan; and it was further declared,

The Associate Synod held its first meeting in the "New Church," at Stirling, at the time now mentioned, and was constituted with prayer by Mr. Ebenezer Erskine; after which the synod made choice of Mr. Ralph Erskine, for their Moderator, and Mr. John Reid, "indweller at Edinburgh," was appointed clerk. The attention of the synod was occupied with a variety of matters which were intimately connected with the purity of discipline, and with the progress of religion. Overtures were introduced, with a view to promote uniformity in church discipline, and in privy censures, recommending also the practice of presbyterial exercises to the different Presbyteries, and urging upon the synod the framing of proper regulations for conducting parochial visitations. It was recommended to all the congregations to make public collections to raise a fund for support of the students; and to guard against the introduction of unqualified persons into the office of the ministry, the committee of overtures brought in a motion, that the synod should enact certain regulations, with a view to prevent injurious consequences arising from the practice of men leaving their trades, and those callings in which providence had placed them, and going to school, in order to their being afterward admitted to the study of divinity. The synod, however, was obliged to delay the consideration of this, and of some other matters, till a future meeting.

that the same Presbytery should have the superintendence of all congregations that might be formed on the north side of the Forth, with the exception of Monteth.

#### PRESBYTERY OF GLASGOW.

Messrs. Ebenezer Erskine, Stirling.	Messrs. David Horn, Cambusnethan.
James Fisher, Glasgow.	Henry Erskine, Falkirk.
David Smyton, Kilmaurs.	John M'Cara, Kilbarchan.
John Cleland, Balfron.	Andrew Black, Cumbernauld.

To this Presbytery was allotted the charge of the following vacant congregations; viz. Mearns, Kilbride, Sanquhar, and Orr in Galloway; under its superintendence also were placed those congregations which were then forming, or such as might afterward be formed, in Ireland.

#### PRESBYTERY OF EDINBURGH.

Messrs. James Mair, Linton.	Messrs. James Scot, Gateshaw.
William Hutton, Stow.	John Whyte, Dunse.
Adam Gib, Edinburgh.	George Murray, Annandale.
Andrew Clarkson, Linlithgow.	Rob. Archibald, Haddington.
Patrick Matthew, Midholm.	Thos. Sommerville, Newcastle.

The following vacant congregations were declared to belong to this Presbytery; viz. Dalkeith, Stitchel, Jedburgh, and London, together with all that might afterward be formed on the English side of the Tweed.

Anxious to contribute their aid in diffusing the light of the gospel throughout benighted Ireland, Mr. John M'Cara, minister at Kilbarchan, and Mr. Isaac Paton, probationer, were appointed to labour for several weeks in the northern parts of that island. The result of this mission was, that Mr. Paton received a call from the Seceders in and around Temple Patrick; and in the following year, was ordained among them as their pastor. The Presbytery of Dunfermline having called the attention of the synod to the state of the congregation of Abbotshall, which had become vacant by the Secession of Mr. Nairn from the Presbytery, the Synod resolved that, before taking any steps toward the settlement of that congregation, a process should be commenced against Mr. Nairn, on the grounds stated in the act of the Associate Presbytery, passed at Edinburgh, on the 3d January, 1743; and Messrs. Alexander Moncrieff, Thomas Mair, James Fisher, and Adam Gib, were appointed a committee to prepare the draft of a libel, to be submitted to the consideration of the synod at their next meeting, that it might afterwards be put into the hands of Mr. Nairn. The committee executed their task, and the draft of a libel was laid before the synod at a subsequent meeting; but a temporary interruption was given to this business, by the controversy carried on respecting the burgess oath; and it was not until the separation which this controversy occasioned, had taken place, that the process was resumed, and brought to an issue by the Antiburgher Associate Synod.

The meetings of the synod, during the year 1745, were frequent. It met no fewer than four times in the course of nine months, viz. at Stirling, in March, and September, and November; and at Edinburgh in May; and during the following year, it met three times. That unhappy controversy had already commenced, which was ere long to rend asunder the Secession Church; and as no small portion of the synod's time, at each meeting, was spent in angry disputings upon the question of the burgess oath, this rendered it necessary that more frequent meetings should be held, than would otherwise have been required for the ordinary despatch of business. The narrative of this controversy shall be reserved till the following chapter, that my readers may be presented with a connected view of its origin, progress, and disastrous issue.

During the progress of these discussions, the synod was actively engaged in diffusing the knowledge of the gospel as extensively as its limited means would permit. Whatever diversity of opinion might exist amongst the members on other points, here they all most harmoniously agreed. Nor

were their efforts confined to the destitute districts of Scotland; their brethren in England and Ireland were not overlooked by them, in their labours of love. In answer to repeated and urgent applications from the friends of the Secession in London, the synod, at its meeting in April 1746, appointed Messrs. Adam Gib and William Mair, to preach for several weeks during the summer, in the British metropolis; and Mr. John Potts, probationer, was appointed to succeed them; and, at the meeting of September, in the same year, Messrs. John Swanston and George Murray were sent to preach at Belfast and Markethill, in the north of Ireland; and a recommendation was given to the Glasgow Presbytery that they should undertake farther missions to the same district.

The Rebellion of 1745, furnished the Seceders with an excellent opportunity of solving the problem, whether it is possible for persons to renounce the communion of a national church, and at the same time continue loyal subjects. Their patriotic conduct during this season of danger and alarm, afforded an admirable refutation of the ungenerous charges preferred against them by their enemies, that they were disaffected to government. Both ministers and people vied with one another in giving proofs of attachment to the reigning family. They were too sensible of the advantages which they enjoyed under the mild sway of the princes of the House of Brunswick, to bid God-speed to any attempt (by whomsoever made), to drive them from the throne. They felt grateful for the protection which the Hanoverian dynasty afforded them, in the possession of their privileges; and they showed their gratitude, by stepping forward, in the hour of their country's peril, and risking life and property in its defence.

When the synod met at Stirling, in the month of September 1745, immediately after the defeat of the King's troops, by the Highlanders, in the battle of Prestonpans, they set apart a portion of their time for solemn prayer to God, on account of the threatening aspect of public affairs; and, before they separated, they appointed a day to be observed by all the congregations under their inspection, in humbling themselves before God, and in earnest supplication to the Divine Being, that he would be pleased to avert the tokens of his displeasure. In their address to the people, they stated what were the views which, as a Synod, they entertained of the wicked attempt that was making to subvert the constitution, and to restore the Stuart family to the throne: for, amongst other reasons which they assign for calling upon congregations to engage in these solemn exercises, they mention the following:—"That the Lord, in his righteous displeasure, hath now permitted the

whole protestant interest in these lands, and all the valuable liberties thereof, to be actually struck at, and awfully shaken, by the son of a popish pretender, at the head of a popish and malignant party in this land. Moreover, not only has the Lord, in prosecution of his controversy, permitted this party to prevail through a great part of the kingdom, and over our army, to the effusion of blood, insomuch that the generation of papists and malignants among us, are lifting up their heads, and exalting themselves proudly over us ; but also the generality appear insensible and regardless of the Lord's controversy, together with the grounds thereof, and to have lost sight and sense of our valuable liberties and privileges, civil and sacred, so that many are disposed to promote the present invasion and rebellion ; others are disposed to give way thereunto ; and the most are little affected therewith before the Lord, and little or no way disposed to turn unto the Lord, and wrestle with him, that he may turn away from the fierceness of his anger, and interpose, in his great and gracious sovereignty, for blasting the designs, progress, and expectations of our enemies, and the enemies of the kingdom of Christ, in these lands."

At the next meeting of Synod (April 1746), an overture was introduced, with a view to determine the mode in which the Seceders should take up arms. In this overture, the principle was distinctly recognised, of its being their duty to appear in support of the common cause, as members of the body politic, and as being "in civil connection with, and subjection to, our sovereign king George." At the same time it was declared, that, in associating together in a military capacity, they should not be incorporated along with those who refused to testify against the corruptions in church and state, but should be enrolled as a separate body of men. This overture, after being discussed, was sent down to presbyteries, that they might consider it, and be prepared to report concerning the propriety of adopting it at a future meeting. The speedy suppression of the Rebellion, however, rendered it unnecessary that the Synod should give any formal judgment upon this point. The obvious intention of those who brought forward and supported this motion was, that the Seceders, in taking up arms to oppose the "antichristian party" (so the rebels were termed), should be assimilated as closely as possible to the covenanters of former times. Hence it was proposed that, should a militia regiment of Seceders be formed, they should be commanded by officers of their own choosing ; should be permitted to choose a minister to dispense religious ordinances among them ; should be furnished with arms and money, according to act of Parliament ; should be dismissed at the end of six months, or after the rebellion was suppressed ; and, finally,



that they should be exempted from taking the usual military oath.\*

Before the subject of taking up arms was discussed in the Synod, corps of volunteers had already been formed by some of the Secession congregations.

When General Hawley was at Edinburgh, making preparations for opposing the rebel army, three hundred Seceders, connected with the congregation of Edinburgh and neighbourhood, applied to the Lord Provost to be allowed to take part in defence of the city. They were furnished with arms and ammunition from the Castle; they hired a sergeant to teach them the military exercise, and marched under colours bearing the following inscription:—"For religion, the covenants, king, and kingdoms." On the night when the rebels were admitted into the city, this band stood to their post in the Infirmary Yard, and did not carry back their arms to the Castle, till they were informed that all others in the city had already done so.†

During the period that the rebels kept possession of Edinburgh, Mr. Gib assembled his congregation for public worship at Dreghorn, near Colinton, about three miles west of the city. On the first Sabbath of their assembling at this place, Mr. Gib addressed his people in the following terms:—"The place where we are met should be putting us in mind of what occasions our removal from our ordinary place of meeting, that we may bring a concern of these things before God. And here I would notice unto you, that our not assembling in our ordinary place, appears warranted in point of necessity, and in point of duty. 1. In point of necessity: That this congregation may, as far as possible, attain composure in worship, as therein we have God, not man to deal with. 2. In point of duty: That thus we may give an open testimony, proof, and document, that we are resolved, through the Lord's grace, to come to no terms with the enemy that has power in the city, but to look on them as enemies, showing ourselves to be none of their confederacy. In our public capacity, it is fit that we make even a voluntary removal from the place where they are, as from the seat of robbers, showing ourselves resolved that their seat shall not be ours."

After the rebel army marched south to England, Mr. Gib and his congregation returned to their usual place of worship, when Mr. Gib made the following address to his people:—"We have reason to acknowledge providential kindness, in

\* See Mr. E. Erskine's Letter to the Marchioness of Lothian, inserted in Dr. Fraser's Memoir of him, p. 442.

† Struthers' History of Scotland, vol. ii. p. 302. Letter from Adam Gib, in the Scots Mag. vol. xxvii. p. 230.

that, when removed from this place, we have yet been allowed to meet within our own bounds, where we had access to something of that composure without which worshipping assemblies are vain: And our very meetings elsewhere, during the time that the antichristian and malignant party now in arms had their seat here, have been an open and necessary testimony against them, and of our purposing no confederacy with them, nor putting any confidence in them.”\*

One of the stations where the rebels kept a principal guard, was Colinton, in the immediate vicinity of which Mr. Gib preached for five successive Sabbaths, in the open air. On these occasions, some of the rebel guard were ordinarily seen standing in the outskirts of the congregation, listening to his prayers and discourses. He had the courage to express, in their presence, his abhorrence of the rebellion, and a hope that it would be brought to a speedy termination. He presented also public prayers in their hearing, each Sabbath, for the safety of the reigning sovereign King George, for the support of his government, for a blessing on his family, and for the preservation of the protestant succession in that family. He prayed also, at the same time, for the suppression of the rebellion, characterizing it as “an unnatural and antichristian rebellion, headed by a popish pretender.” On one of these Sabbaths, while some of the rebels were standing before him, he read an act of the Associate Synod for a solemn fast, to be observed on the following Tuesday, which act was mainly levelled against the rebellion, with a call to pray for the king and against the rebellion, in such express terms as those already mentioned. During the reading of the act, the rebels showed great displeasure, and threatened, in the hearing of some of the people, to prevent the observance of the fast; but though they then attended, they were restrained from using any violence.†

When intelligence was received that the rebel army were on their return from England, and when apprehensions were entertained of their paying another visit to the Scottish metropolis, the Edinburgh Seceders were called upon by the sheriff again to take part in defence of the city. This call they cheerfully obeyed. The post assigned them was the College-Yard, which post (says Mr. Gib), they kept, “learning their exercise, all at their own expense, till a sufficient body of the military arrived.”‡

The Glasgow Seceders were not behind their brethren in Edinburgh, in manifesting their attachment to their sovereign at the present crisis. They asked and obtained arms from the

\* Gib's Letter in the Scots Mag. vol. xxvii.

† Ibid.

‡ Ibid.

government. They readily obeyed a call that was given them, to attend the army at Falkirk, and some of them lost their lives in the disastrous battle that was fought in that neighbourhood. In several districts of the country, the congregations met for the purpose of drilling, that they might be the better prepared for co-operating with regular troops, whenever their services might be required.

This spirit of loyalty, on the part of the people, was greatly encouraged both by the exhortations and by the example of their ministers. By the active measures which the Secession ministers adopted, in support of the royal cause, they attracted the notice, and called forth the approbation of persons occupying high official situations, while they rendered themselves peculiarly obnoxious to the rebel party. On the evening after the battle of Falkirk, a search was made for Mr. Gib in that town by the rebels, because, a few hours before the battle was fought, he had been instrumental in getting a person who had just come from the rebel camp, apprehended and carried before General Hawley, to be examined for intelligence.\* Mr. Moncrieff of Abernethy suffered the spoliation of his property, by the rebels, because he refused to pay cess when demanded by their leader. He had also his son and heir taken from him, and kept as a prisoner at Perth, with a threat that he would be put to death should any attempt be made at rescue.†

At this critical period, Mr. Ebenezer Erskine stood conspicuously forward in support of the righteous cause. When the rebellion broke out, and when it was anticipated that an attack would be made upon Stirling, he exerted himself in raising several companies to defend the town; and it was mainly owing to the influence which he possessed, that a band of six hundred volunteers was raised, who were furnished with arms and accoutrements from the castle. It is said that he acted as captain of one of the volunteer companies. One night, when it was expected that an attack would be made upon the town, he appeared in military costume, in the guard-room, resolved to share the dangers of the defence. Some of those who were present expressed their surprise at seeing him, and urged him to go home to his prayers, as being more suitable to his profession. His reply was, "I am determined to take the hazard of the night along with you, for the present crisis requires the arms as well as the prayers of all good subjects." When Stirling was taken possession of by the rebels, Mr. Erskine withdrew from the town, not more from prudential considerations, connected with his safety, than that he might not have

\* Gib's Letter in the Scots Mag. vol. xxvii. † Gib's Display, vol. ii. p. 250.

the appearance of yielding submission to the usurped authority of Charles. For several Sabbaths he preached to his people in the wood of Tillibody, a few miles to the north of Stirling.

The Marquis of Lothian, hearing that it was the intention of the Seceders to raise a regiment of militia for the defence of the country, wrote the following letter to Mr. Ebenezer Erskine, making an offer of the services of his son, Lord Robert Ker, as colonel of the Secession regiment:—

*“London, January 25, 1745-6.*

“REV. SIR,—Being informed that many of his Majesty’s well-affected subjects (with whom you have great interest), zealous for the defence of our present happy government and invaluable interests, now attacked by France, Spain, the Pope, and a popish pretender, have offered to take arms and serve the King, upon condition of being allowed to choose their own officers: I therefore take the liberty to offer my son, Lord Robert Ker, who is ambitious to serve as their colonel, if they do him and my family the honour to prefer him. It would not be decent of me to give his character, but am persuaded he would behave and act so as to gain their good opinion. I beg to obtain your forgiveness for this trouble, and to be esteemed, Sir, your most obedient and most humble servant,

“LOTHIAN.

“The Duke is soon to be with you, and it will be very proper that you address him; for which end, my son, if you desire, shall attend you.”

To this communication Mr. Erskine gave the following reply:—

*“Stirling, February 8, 1746.*

“MR LORD,—I had the honour of your Lordship’s (letter) of the 25th of January, Sabbath last, when I returned from my exile through the Highland (bands) which had infested this place for about twenty days. Thanks be to God who made the very name and arms of his Royal Highness, the Duke of Cumberland, such a terror to them, that they left the place with such precipitance, that as they blew up their magazine in the church of St. Ninians, lest it should fall into the hands of our army, so they left a great deal of their baggage for them. I had wrote your Lordship sooner, had it not been for that confusion the place was in for some days, while the Duke and his army were passing.

“In consequence of your Lordship’s letter, I did myself the honour of waiting upon your son, Lord Robert, on Monday last, when he was in this place with the army, and told him of what motion was made to me by your Lordship and my Lady Marchioness. He told me he had some knowledge of that affair; but in regard of the sudden flight of the enemy, and that there was now a great probability that the Rebellion might be extinguished by the regular troops under the command of his Royal Highness the Duke of Cumberland; he did not think there would be any occasion for the Seceders to regiment themselves at present. However, as I told himself, if there were any occasion for the Seceders to appear in arms in defence of his Majesty’s person, and government, and family, and the liberty we enjoy under his protection, I know of none that would be more acceptable to them as a leader or colonel than Lord Robert, both upon account of his own presumptive merit, of which I had good information from General Blackeney and others, as also on account of that noble family of Lothian he is come of, which hath both formerly and of late made such appearances for the Protestant interest and our reformation-work in Scotland. And in this your noble family and we who are

Seceders from the Established Church, do happily agree; for our Secession from the present judicatories goes purely and only upon this very ground, that we think they have, in many particulars, departed from the covenanted doctrine, discipline, and government of the reformation Church of Scotland. —I am, my Lord, your Lordship's most humble and most obedient servant,

"EBENEZER ERSKINE."

The activity and zeal which Mr. Erskine displayed in the cause of his sovereign, called forth the following letter of thanks, which was addressed to him by command of the Duke of Cumberland :—

*"Falkirk, February 1, 1745-6.*

"SIR,—His Royal Highness has ordered me to tell you, that he is much obliged to you for your intelligence, and for the zeal you show in his Majesty's service. With regard to the information contained in your letter, our advices since received make it unnecessary to do any thing upon it. But his Royal Highness is not the less sensible of your good intention.—I am, Sir, your obedient servant,

"H. CONWAY,

"Aide-de-Camp to H. R. H.""

In addition to the above, I shall here insert two letters addressed by the Marchioness of Lothian to Mr. Gib of Edinburgh, which will illustrate still further the excellent spirit displayed by the Seceders during the period of the rebellion :—

*"Newbattle, January 20, 1746.*

"REV. SIR,—The noble stand which the people of your profession have made for the religion and liberties of the country, must endear them to all true Christians, and to the countenance of those who are able to forward and support them in their valuable designs.

"Their conduct must make every one of revolution principles proud of showing them regard. My Lord must value them on that head; and it gave me no small pleasure when I heard that, as they wanted a colonel or leader, some of them had pointed at my son Lord Robert. I could not omit, therefore, signifying to you, that whatever service my Lord Marquis or my son can do to them, they will most cheerfully undertake. Only as there has been an offer made my son by some of the country militia, I would wish that he knew how far he had in his power to show his respect to you in the first place; and so far as you can bring this matter to an issue, it shall be taken as a piece of respect done this family, which we shall not be unmindful to acknowledge. Your answer as soon as possible will oblige, Rev. Sir, your most humble servant,

"M. LOTHIAN."

Mr. Gib, having written in reply to the above, received the following answer from the Marchioness :—

*"Newbattle, February 5, 1745-6.*

"SIR,—Give me leave to return you hearty thanks for your kind and affectionate letter of January 21st, and to assure you that it will yield (the) greatest pleasure to this family to deserve the honour you do us. And as it

\* This and the two preceding letters have been extracted from Dr. Fraser's *Life of Mr. Ebenezer Erskine*.

would be a great pity your people and followers did not take the opportunity of the Duke's being in our country to testify in a proper way your warm zeal for the cause of religion and liberty, which yet will be but doing yourselves justice, I shall be glad if the enclosed scroll contains any hints to your liking. And if you shall judge it proper to have any such deed made out, my son Lord Robert will reckon it his honour to have it and any commissioners you send, introduced by proper hands to his Royal Highness.

"I have wrote Mr. Ebenezer Erskine of this date, and if you'll be so good (as) to communicate this letter to Mr. Fisher, and any others you think proper, it will be vastly obliging to, Sir, your very humble servant,

"M. LOTHIAN."

The narrative now given of the loyal part which those in the communion of the Secession acted, during the troublesome period of 1745-6, shows how grievously they have been slandered, in having the charge of disaffection preferred against them. Never was there a class of men, in reference to whom, viewed collectively, such a charge has been more unfounded. The ministers, instead of being, what some have been pleased to term them, "factious demagogues," were men of honourable feeling, as well as religious principle; alike faithful to their God and to their king. Their loyalty, too, was the more unquestionable, that it was *unbought*. It was not called forth by court favours previously received, nor was it displayed in expectation of its being speedily rewarded by the bestowal of some lucrative benefice. It was, in them, the dictate of a conscience enlightened by the word of God; and the manifestation of it was the natural result of that love of civil and religious freedom, for which they were eminently distinguished. With regard, again, to the people, the zeal which they displayed, in coming cheerfully forward to the defence of the government, when it was in danger of being overturned, was alike creditable to their intelligence and their piety. The same religious principle, which led them to withdraw from the communion of a church, in which they could no longer conscientiously remain, prompted them to rally round the throne of their sovereign, when it was shaken by the spirit of rebellion. Their abhorrence of despotism and their love of freedom appeared pre-eminent in both cases. The lessons which they practised on this subject, they had learned from their Bible; and, next to the glory of God, the temporal and spiritual welfare of their fellow-men was the object which they were most anxious to promote.

Mr. Gib, in the second volume of his "Display,"\* bears the following testimony to the loyalty of the Seceders:—"Then, as now, the Seceders were spread through all the Lowlands of Scotland; from Dunkeld to Cheviot, from St.

Andrews to Ayr: and in the counties of Angus, Mearns, Banff, Elgin, Nairn, and Ross. Yet not one of them in all Scotland, even in places where the rebels had the greatest power and influence, could ever be got to join, or to show any favour to the designs of that party. All of them, men and women, took all opportunities to manifest their abhorrence of the Rebellion."

This statement is overcharged, and claims for the Seceders more than the truth of history warrants. That in a body so widely extended as the Secession then was, no individuals should be found who were disposed to befriend the cause of the exiled family, is more than what could reasonably have been expected. There were instances, though they were few in number, of such Jacobitical leanings among the Seceders. But those persons who gave any countenance to the rebel party, were regarded as offenders by the church courts, and were dealt with accordingly. Two members of the congregation of Abernethy were appointed, by the presbytery of Dunfermline, to be censured for sinful compliance with the rebels; and a member of the congregation of Stirling received a solemn rebuke, in presence of the session, for a similar offence. Exceptions, it is said, confirm the general rule: And from these instances now mentioned, two inferences are deducible; first, that the church courts of the Secession showed their abhorrence of the rebellion, not merely by warning their people against it, but by subjecting to ecclesiastical discipline those who gave it any countenance; and, secondly, that the people belonging to the Secession, viewed as a whole, were most devoted in their attachment to the reigning family, and continued firm in their allegiance to government, seeing that in two of the largest congregations connected with the association, —and these situated in the very centre of the rebels' operations,—only *three* individuals were found against whom the charge of compliance with the "antichristian party" could be substantiated.

## CHAPTER VI.

Burgess Oath controversy—Reasons why it ought not to be silently passed over—Overture concerning the burgess oath—Religious clause in the burgess oath—Different opinions concerning it—Keen debates in the Synod—Mr. Adam Gib's opinion of the religious clause—Mr. Archibald Hall's opinion—Motion made concerning the religious clause—Counter-motion for delay—Counter-motion carried—Mr. Gib dissents—Joined by Messrs. Moncrieff and Campbell—Meeting of Synod in September 1745—A motion for delay carried—A meeting of Synod in November—The business again delayed—Meeting of Synod in April 1746—Full attendance of ministers and elders—Several healing measures proposed—All of them rejected—Motion *against* the religious clause—Motion carried—Mr. Ralph Erskine and several others protest—Meeting of Synod in September—Motion concerning making the former decision a term of communion—Protest against the putting of this motion—Stormy debates—A motion for delay carried—Sixteen members protest—Mr. Ebenezer Erskine's declaration—Meeting of Synod in April 1747—A great interest excited—Discussions concerning the statement of the vote—Mr. Gib's protest—A vote stated concerning the decision of Synod in April 1746—Mr. Moncrieff's protestation—The question concerning said decision put to the vote—Carried in the affirmative—Mr. Thomas Mair's declaration—Disruption of the Synod—A number of the brethren meet in Mr. Gib's house—Claim the authority of the Associate Synod—Resolutions adopted by them—Condemnatory acts—Questions added to the formula—Burgher and Antiburgher designations—Proceedings of the Burgher brethren—Letter to Mr. Thomas Mair and Mr. Gib—Answers of these brethren—Burgher Synod meets at Dunfermline—Act of Nullity passed by them—Applications to them for sermon—*Pro re nata* meeting at Falkirk—Letter sent to the Antiburgher brethren—Meeting of the Antiburgher Synod—Resolves to libel the Burgher brethren—Articles of the libel—Mr. Hutton appears before the Synod—Reads a paper—Is deposed—Sentence of deposition and excommunication pronounced upon all the Burgher brethren—Privy censures in the Antiburgher Synod—Reflections on the breach.

THERE may be a diversity of opinion, among the friends of the Secession, about the propriety of giving a place in this narrative to those disputes, respecting the burgess oath, which terminated in a disruption of the Synod. Some may be inclined to think, that the writer of these pages would have acted a much more filial part toward his parent-church if, instead of Ham-like, exposing her sin and her nakedness to his brethren, he had gone backward, with reverential step, and thrown the mantle of oblivion over that part of her conduct, which exhibits almost the only blot on her history. With those who cherish such an amiable feeling as this the author cordially sympathises, though he thinks it would be indulging it to a morbid excess, were he to permit it to arrest the progress of his pen in detailing the steps of a controversy, which, while it lasted, possessed an all-absorbing interest within the

circle of the combatants; and which, though productive of many painful consequences, yet, by the overruling providence of God, has tended greatly to the enlargement of the Secession Church, and to the more extensive diffusion of the gospel; inasmuch as it originated two rival Synods entertaining similar views of doctrine, discipline, and worship, and equally distinguished for their zeal and activity in promoting pure and undefiled religion. He is aware that in the present circumstances of the Secession Church, after a reunion betwixt these two Synods has been so recently and so happily accomplished, the ground he is about to occupy, in this chapter, is tender, and requires to be delicately trodden upon. He shall, therefore, apply himself to this part of his narrative with more than ordinary caution; and shall sedulously guard against permitting a single sentence to drop from his pen which shall either indicate the existence of partizanship in himself, or excite an angry feeling in the bosom of any of his brethren. His object shall be, carefully to examine and compare the statements of conflicting writers, that he may thus arrive at a proper knowledge of the facts: these facts he shall lay before his readers, without colouring and without comment; and instead of constituting himself a judge, and pronouncing a sentence upon either the one party or the other, he shall commit this delicate work into the hands of his readers, and shall leave it to them to approve or to censure, according as the judgment of each may direct. The author is greatly encouraged to proceed in this part of his work by the confidence which he reposes in the intelligence and in the candour of his brethren. To both of these qualities he makes his appeal in the present instance. He safely trusts their good sense with the decision of the question, whether it would have been proper, in such a narrative as the present, to omit taking any notice of the burgess oath controversy, merely on account of the unpleasant recollections which it is fitted to recall; and he relies upon their candour, for giving him full credit for the statement which he makes, when he says, that, in the details which he has presented on this subject, he has made it his anxious study, so far as he consistently could, to consult the feelings of all parties concerned. It is so far fortunate, that the controversy, to which the attention of the reader is about to be directed, possesses now no practical interest, and in all probability never shall; and it may, therefore, be safely consigned to the page of history, without any dread of its again rousing into a flame the angry passions of men. It has long ceased to agitate the churches. Those good men who, when living, attached so much importance to it, have long ago seen "eye to eye" in that "better country," where the voice of discord is

for ever hushed ; and the feelings, with which we now look back upon the strife, are similar to those which we experience when gazing upon some spot in nature over which we are told a dreadful hurricane once swept, the effects of which have completely passed away, and where nothing now is to be seen but peace and verdure.

At the first meeting of the Associate Synod at Stirling, in March 1745, an overture was transmitted from the Presbytery of Dunfermline, to the following effect :—" That the synod take under their consideration, whether or not the burgess oath be agreeable to the word of God, and to the received principles of this church founded thereupon ; and particularly to those contained in the Judicial Act and Testimony emitted by the Associate Presbytery, in the act relating to Mr. Nairn's affair, and in the act concerning the renovation of our covenants." An overture was also transmitted from the Presbytery of Edinburgh :—" For the synod to consider upon, and endeavour to remove any public bars that may be presently found in the way of due progress in covenanting work." The latter of these overtures was subsequently withdrawn, and it was agreed that the former should be considered at a meeting, which was appointed to be held in the month of May for the discussion of this and some other matters.

When the synod met in May, they entered upon the consideration of this overture at a private sederunt, and the *religious clause* contained in several burgess oaths,\* became the grand topic in dispute. The clause ran in the following terms :—" *Here I protest before God, and your Lordships, that I profess, and allow with my heart, the true religion presently professed within this realm, and authorized by the laws thereof: I shall abide thereat, and defend the same to my life's end ; renouncing the Roman religion called papistry.*" The question,—What is meant by the "*true religion presently professed within this realm,*" &c. gave rise to long and keen discussion. One party in the synod interpreted these words to be of similar import with the true religion *as* presently professed and authorized, &c.—and maintained that swearing this part of the oath was equivalent to giving a solemn approbation of those corruptions that prevailed in the Established Church, and against which the Secession had publicly testified. Another party maintained that this clause of the oath bound the individual, who swore it, to approve of *the true religion itself, as that which was settled and professed* in this realm, but did not bind him to approve of *the manner*

\* This clause was contained in the oath imposed upon burgesses in the towns of Edinburgh, Glasgow, and Perth.

in which it might be settled and professed ; and that, therefore, it did not require of him any approbation of the prevailing corruptions in either church or state.

To give a detailed account of the arguments which the contending parties advanced, in support of the opposite views, which they maintained on this question, would be neither profitable nor interesting. Much ingenuity, as well as much heat, was displayed on both sides. Connected with the main question, a number of collateral ones was introduced, and all of them agitated with the same keenness ; and thus the strife, which at first had comparatively but a small beginning, gradually swelled into a magnitude, altogether disproportionate to its merits, and much greater than either friend or foe could have anticipated. Instead of embodying in language of my own the sentiments which were expressed in the course of the controversy, I shall for the sake of avoiding even the appearance of partiality, give an extract from a respectable writer on each side of the question, which will place before my readers the particular views held, by both parties in the synod, respecting the religious clause of the burgess oath.

"A plain case," says Mr. Gib,\* "is rather obscured by laborious reasoning in its behalf ; and it speaks best for itself. Explication, instead of argumentation, is all that the present case properly requires : And, for this, the following notes may suffice :—

"First, the subject of the oath, in the clause referred to, is called the *true religion* ; a name of no certain or fixed sense ; but as defined by the words following : According to which, the swearer means it of what is professed and authorized in this realm, under the character of the *true religion* ; as in general the *Protestant* religion, opposed to the Roman religion called *Papistry*.

"Secondly, the oath is manifestly of a *current* nature ; still respecting the *true religion*, under the character of being *presently* professed and authorized : And so the meaning of it has never any relation to the past, but always to the present state of matters, in the professing and authorizing of the *true religion* ; continually changing just according to all the changes which take place in that professing and authorizing.

"Thirdly, it is therefore obvious at first view, in what manner the oath of the religious clause 'comes necessarily in this period to be used and applied :' That it is necessarily used about and applied unto the *true religion*, just according

\* Display, vol. ii. p. 25.

to the professing and authorizing of it in this period, among the hands of the present national, or Established church of Scotland.

“ Fourthly, the swearer acknowledges a present professing of the true religion in the Established Church: and, at the same time, solemnly asserts a present professing of it on his own part. But these *two professings* cannot, with any ingenuity, be taken for *two different ways of professing*. The professing in the Established Church, and the swearer’s professing, must be taken for one and the same way of professing the true religion: So that the swearer must be understood, according to the terms and nature of the oath, to take up with the professing of it in the Established Church, as the pattern of his professing it. The oath must therefore mean the swearer’s satisfaction with the present public state of true religion, as to that professing and authorizing of it which is among the hands of the present Established Church: So far as to mean, that he sees no reason or warrant for a different way of professing the true religion, in a separate communion from her; no such defections and corruptions, in the present professing and authorizing of it among her hands, as to require or warrant a Secession from her, unto a professing of it in the way of a public testimony against these defections and corruptions. It is, therefore, most evidently an oath of immediate and full communion with the present Established Church: bearing the swearer’s engagement to abide at and defend the true religion, in that communion, to his life’s end. Wherefore,

“ Fifthly, the oath of the religious clause doth materially and plainly amount to a solemn *abjuration* of the whole Secession Testimony; or of the whole present Testimony for religion and reformation, as maintained by the Associate Synod and those under their inspection, and avouched in the bond for renewing our solemn covenants: So that, to swear this oath of the bond, and also the oath of the religious clause in burgh oaths, would be, upon the matter, to *avouch* and *abjure*, promiscuously, the whole Testimony among their hands.”

The Rev. Archibald Hall, vindicating the view held by that party in the synod who were favourable to the disputed religious clause, says,\* “ The original design of that clause is manifest from the tenor of the clause itself, viz. *to exclude papists from becoming burghesses*. Therefore, every burghess in Edinburgh, Perth, and Glasgow, must swear, ‘ That he renounces the Roman religion called papistry.’ Dr. Doddridge has very well observed, ‘ That if any man’s religion necessarily subject him to the obedience of a foreign prince,

\* Impartial Survey, p. 27.

the government under which he is born and protected has a right, by the grand law of self-preservation, to insist on some more than ordinary security for his good behaviour in such circumstances. And this is evidently the case of the papists among us. They are under such obligations in conscience to obey the pope, and to submit themselves to whatsoever prince he shall see fit to establish here, that they are at best but very precarious subjects to a protestant monarch : ' (*Sermon on the absurdity and iniquity of persecution for conscience' sake.*) Therefore (continues Mr. Hall), to exclude papists from burgess-ships, is no persecution for conscience' sake, but a prudent step of sound policy. The religious clause of the burgess oaths in the burghs foresaid does exclude them : and such an oath may be very safely required and taken.

" Secondly, the oath is adapted to serve another purpose too, and that is to satisfy the *imposer* what the religious sentiments of the *swearer* really are. The swearer upon this head declares, that *he professes and allows with his heart the true religion*. Should the *imposer* reply, ' This is a vague account of your faith : every body will call his own sentiments *the true religion*.' The swearer answers, ' *The true religion which I allow with my heart, is presently professed in this realm, and authorized by the laws thereof.*' If the *imposer* should still insist, ' Then I suppose you have carefully examined all the complex circumstances of the profession and settlement of religion, and particularly the acts of parliament at and since the Revolution, authorizing religion ; and upon a perusal of them, you approve of the whole ; and that this is the meaning of your present oath.' If the swearer should answer, ' *Sir, I only profess and allow with my heart the true religion presently professed in this realm, and authorized by the laws thereof,*' I am persuaded every sensible man would think the *imposer's* folly justly reprov'd, and sufficiently exposed, by this short reply ; compare John xxi. 21—23.

" Barely to suppose an *imposer* could be so weak, is a dishonour to any of these famous burghs, as it insinuates what I am convinced they will never be guilty of, namely, that *they intrust their affairs in the hands of fools*. But if the case should be realized, the bare repetition of the words of the oath must be a full confutation of the *imposer's* ignorance, and demonstrate that he exceeded his province in *forcing a sense so foreign and unnatural* upon the oath. If the swearer should think proper to add, ' I am satisfied that the true religion is contained in the word of God, and exemplified in the Westminster Confession of Faith in the main heads of it ; and I know this is publicly professed, and legally authorized in Scotland, though I never examined the act of parliament on

the head, to form any judgment about it one way or other : But I am sorry, Sir, to see so much practical contempt of that system manifested by many individuals, and even by the judicatures of the Established Church. I allow with my heart *the system professed and authorized by law*, as it is defined in her standards ; but I lament and abhor her degenerate proceedings.' I appeal to common sense, whether the imposer could reject a person offering to swear the burgess oath in this sense : and I further appeal to the same venerable bar to decide whether the imposer or the swearer was the most sensible and faithful commentator. Could her virgin voice be heard amid so much art and violence as have disgraced this controversy, she would give a verdict highly mortifying to the imposer."

Such were the views held respecting the religious clause of the burgess oath by the two conflicting parties in the synod. After several sederunts had been spent at the *pro re nata* meeting in May in debating the question, it was proposed that the following motion should be put, as comprehending both sides of the debate, viz. " Whether the article concerning religion, in some burgess oaths, implies an approbation of the state of religion as authorized by the laws of the land that are in force, particularly the revolution settlement of religion confirmed by the union, and no more extensive testimony to the settlement and profession of religion than said is ? Or, is it to be understood of the reformation that took place before the year 1638, and in general of the true religion, which is invariably the same in every period in opposition to popery and all false religion ?" Some of the members opposed the putting of this motion, and moved that the synod should delay giving any decision on the question till a subsequent meeting. This latter motion being put to the vote, was carried. Mr. Gib entered a dissent, in which he was joined by Messrs. Moncrieff and Campbell.

The synod met again in September 1745, when the consideration of this subject was resumed. Two sederunts were mostly spent in debating the question, " Whether the synod should continue to sit next week, and proceed in the affair of the burgess oath, or delay it till a *pro re nata* meeting in November ?" It carried by a majority, *Delay*, against which decision Mr. Moncrieff protested ; and his protest was adhered to by Messrs. Gib, Clarkson, Brown, Campbell, and Thomas Mair.

In the month of November, the synod sat for nearly two weeks, the greater part of which time was spent in reasoning upon this subject, when those who were anxious for a decision at last proposed that the following question should be put to a vote, viz. " Whether or not it be, in the present circum-

stances, agreeable to the word of God, and our received principles, particularly to the principles adopted by this synod in their act and testimony, and in their act for renewing our covenants (National and Solemn League), especially for those in accession to this synod, and holding the same testimony with them, to swear the religious clause in some burgess oaths?" This question was met by a motion for delay, which motion being carried, Messrs. Moncrieff, Gib, and Campbell, renewed their former protest.

At the next ordinary meeting of the synod in April 1746, there was a full attendance both of ministers and elders, there being no fewer than thirty-seven members present; and the all-engrossing question of the burgess oath was the subject of long and repeated debates. With the view of preventing what some dreaded might be the consequence of coming to a decision on the question, viz. a rupture, several overtures of a healing nature were proposed and discussed, but without any good effect. One of these overtures was, "That the first clause of some burgess oaths might, for the sake of peace, be explained according to the original and obvious meaning and intent of the words themselves, in such a sense as might be adapted to the present testimony, especially as magistrates of burghs are the original framers and administrators of the said oath." Another overture was, for "a mutual forbearance of one another in the present question, as being one of these things which was never matter of testimony in the Church of Scotland, and whereunto we never had attained." A third overture proposed, "That for the sake of peace, and to prevent different practices, any under our inspection who are to enter burgesses, be advised to take the burgess oath without the foresaid first clause, till the members of the synod come to see more clearly, eye to eye, in this matter." While a fourth party suggested an overture for "a new religious clause to be introduced into the burgess oaths; and that Seceders when occasion offered should insist for having the oath administered to them with the new clause, or otherwise should refuse it altogether."

To all of these proposals, objections were urged by one or other of the parties; and the whole, of course, fell to the ground. On the 9th of April, after the above overtures had been discussed and laid aside, it was agreed that at the next sederunt a state of the question should be proposed for bringing the matter to a decision. Accordingly, when the synod met in the evening of the same day, the following motion was proposed:—"The synod find, that a swearing the religious clause of some burgess oaths by any under their inspection, as the said clause comes necessarily in this period to be used and applied, does not agree with the present state

and circumstances of the testimony for religion and reformation which this synod, with those under their inspection, are maintaining; particularly, that it does not agree unto, nor consist with, an entering into the bond for renewing our solemn covenants: And that, therefore, those of the Secession cannot further, with safety of conscience, and without sin, swear any burghess oath with the said religious clause, while matters with reference to the profession and settlement of religion continue in such circumstances as at present. Moreover, the synod find, that burghesses of the Secession, who are already concerned in such oaths, should be required, in order to their admission into the bond for renewing our solemn covenants, to attend conference with their respective sessions, for signifying satisfaction with the present judgment of the synod, and a sense of the mistake they have hitherto, through inadvertency, been under concerning such burghess oaths." A counter-motion was made, that the synod delay coming to a decision on this question till their next meeting. But the first motion was carried by a majority of thirteen to nine. It being the second week of the synod when this question was decided, a number of the members who had gone home at the close of the first week had not returned; but this did not render the decision less valid, though an attempt was afterwards made to bring discredit upon it, by insisting upon the comparatively small majority by which the question was carried. Against this decision Messrs. Ralph Erskine, James Fisher, William Hutton, Henry Erskine, and John M'Cara, ministers; and James Wardlaw and William Robertson, elders, protested. Mr. James Mair craved that it be marked in the records, that while he laboured under difficulties with regard to the religious clause in the burghess oath, yet he did not find himself at liberty to acquiesce in the synod's decision, pronouncing the swearing of it to be sinful, and inconsistent with the testimony of the Secession Church. Messrs. Adam Gib, Thomas Mair, and James Thomson, were appointed a committee to answer the reasons of protest, so soon as they should be given in.

At the next meeting of the synod, in September, the protesters insisted that their reasons of protest, which had been lodged with the clerk in the month of June, should be read; but this was opposed, on the ground that the committee appointed at the former meeting had not yet prepared answers to the reasons. A proposal was then made, and acquiesced in by all parties, that some time should be spent in conference and prayer, with a view to remove any misunderstandings that might have been occasioned by the proceedings of their last meeting. After some time had been spent in these exercises, without producing the desired effect, it was moved

that the following question be put to the vote, viz. *Whether the decision of the former synod, respecting the burgess oath, should be a term of ministerial and Christian communion so as to exclude any from church-fellowship who might differ in judgment from said decision, or to expose any minister or Christian to the censures of the church?* Mr. Moncrieff protested against this motion being entertained, on the ground that it had been introduced *per saltum*, and that the received principles of the synod were called in question by it: and he moved, *Lay aside this question, and proceed immediately to the business of the synod, or not?* This gave rise to long altercation. The previous question was then put, Which of the two motions should first be voted? And the sense of the house being taken on this question, it carried in favour of the first being put to the vote. Another long and stormy debate ensued. One party in the synod insisted that those who brought forward this motion should give some explanation of it, so as to determine whether, if the question should be decided in the negative, this would be equivalent to declaring, that the synod's decision should not be a term of communion, *whatever course* of opposition to it might be pursued in time coming. Such an explanation the other party refused to give.\* When the vote was about to be taken, Mr. Gib protested against the question being put in its present form, without some explanation being given, as he conceived that it would be both irregular and unreasonable to do so. Messrs. Clarkson and Archibald, ministers, and Mr. Adam Wilson, elder, adhered to his protest.

Another motion was brought forward, viz. *Proceed to putting the above question, or delay the same till next meeting?* This occasioned another angry discussion. Mr. Fisher, and other thirteen members, protested against the motion being voted, on the ground that it would amount to "a material declaration of the mind of the synod, that the act of last synod, concerning the first clause of some burgess oaths, is a term of ministerial and Christian communion." The vote was then taken, when it carried *Delay*, against which decision sixteen members protested.

Mr. Ebenezer Erskine, who had not been present at the meeting of synod in April, when the sentence condemning the religious clause in the burgess oaths was passed, now rose up and asked, *Whether the synod would reverse said sentence or not?* And the synod having refused to entertain such a proposal, he gave in a declaration of adherence to the protest formerly taken against the decision, for reasons to be lodged

with the moderator, before the first of February. In this declaration he was joined by Mr. David Horn, and two elders. Mr. Ralph Erskine also protested for "liberty of a more solemn and further testimony against the whole of the synod's conduct concerning the question in debate at this and former meetings, when he shall find cause." To this protest five ministers and five elders adhered.\*

The meeting of synod, which assembled at Edinburgh on the 7th of April, 1747, is one, the proceedings of which cannot be perused without feelings of the deepest regret. The discussions of this meeting were peculiarly stormy, and the issue of it was truly deplorable. Those good men who, for a number of years, had co-operated harmoniously together in vindicating the cause of truth, and in advancing the interests of religion, were destined to witness, on this occasion, the disruption of those ties by which they had hitherto been united in the fellowship of the church, as well as in the endearing intimacies of private friendship. Since the commencement of the controversy respecting the burgh oath, a spirit of alienation had gradually been gaining ground; and every new debate connected with this subject tended to alienate the parties more and more, until, as in the case of Paul and Barnabas, the contention of this meeting "was so sharp between them, that they departed asunder one from the other."

The uncommon interest which the discussion of this question had excited, amongst both ministers and people, produced on the present occasion a full attendance of members. Out of thirty-two ministers belonging to the synod, twenty-nine were present, and the number of elders that attended was twenty-seven, making in all a sederunt of fifty-six members.†

\* Gib's Display, vol. ii. p. 45.

† Having noticed, in perusing some of the controversial pamphlets on this question, that the authors vary in the statements which they give of the number of members present at this Synod, I have here inserted from the records of Synod, a *correct* list of the sederunt, both of ministers and elders. The ministers present were, Messrs. James Mair (Linton), Moderator; Alexander Moncrieff, Abernethy; Ebenezer Erskine, Stirling; James Fisher, Glasgow; Ralph Erskine, Dunfermline; Adam Gib, Edinburgh; Thomas Mair, Orwell; William Hutton, Stow; Andrew Clarkson, Linlithgow; Patrick Matthew, Midholm; James Scot, Gateshaw; John White, Dunse; George Murray, Annandale; Robert Archibald, Haddington; John Smith, Jedburgh; David Smyton, Kilmaurs; David Horn, Cambusnethan; Henry Erskine, Falkirk; John M'Cara, Kilbarchan; Andrew Black, Cumbernauld; Andrew Thomson, Mearns; David Telfar, Bridge-of-Teith; James Thomson, Burntisland; George Brown, Perth; William Campbell, Ceres; John Erskine, Leslie; William Mair, Muckhart; James Johnston, Dundee; and Isaac Paton, Templepatrick, Ireland.

The elders present were, Messrs. Robert Paterson, from the session of Stirling; John Marshall, from Glasgow; Samuel Harper, from Kilmaurs; Peter Edmond, from Balfron; Robert Keder, from Cambusnethan; John

Mr. James Mair presided as moderator, and Mr. William Hutton acted as clerk *pro tempore*.

On the second day of the meeting, it was moved that the synod should proceed to give a decision on the question, the final determination of which had been delayed from the last meeting till the present. This question, at the present meeting, was thrown into a new and more extended form, and ran in the following terms:—"Whether the decision anent the religious clause in some burgess oaths, passed by this synod, in April, 1746, shall now or afterwards be made a term of ministerial and Christian communion, aye and until the making of the same to be so, shall be referred, by way of overture, unto presbyteries and kirk-sessions, in order to their giving judgment thereanent; that so there may, in the mean time, be a friendly dealing among the members of this synod with one another, in a way of conference and prayer, in order to their coming, through the Lord's pity, to see eye to eye in the matter of the said religious clause, or not." It was urged, that the determining of this question was the first business to which the synod was pledged, by its vote at last meeting. In opposition to this view of the matter, it was as strenuously urged by others, that, before proceeding to give an authoritative answer to this question, the synod should read and consider the reasons of protest against the foresaid decision, and the answers to these reasons; as, until this was done (it was alleged), many members, especially the elders, who had not been present at former discussions, could not be supposed to possess sufficient information on the subject, to enable them to say whether the decision should be made a term of communion, or not. The following motion was proposed by those persons who entertained these sentiments, viz. *Proceed to call for the reasons of protest, and the answers thereto, or not?* A long and a hot debate ensued, which terminated in a proposal that the sense of the house should be taken on the question, which of the motions should first be put to the vote? But here a new difficulty was started, which gave rise to another debate not less keen than the preceding one. Some insisted, that the persons who had protested against the deci-

Callander, from Falkirk; William Millar, from Kilbarchan; James Millar, from —; Thomas Ford, from Linton; Robert Lees, from Stow; John Mowbray, from Edinburgh; Andrew Graham, from Linlithgow; Charles Scot, from Midholm; Walter Henderson, from Gatheslaw; John Wilson, from Dunse; James Johnstone, from Lockerby; William Manderson, from Haddington; Andrew Douglas, from Jedburgh; James Beugo, from Dunfermline; Alexander Lyal, from Burntisland; William Henderson, from Abernethy; George Coventry, from Orwell; Robert Wishart, from Perth; David Donaldson, from Ceres; Thomas Bogie, from Leslie; Thomas Drysdale, from Muckhart; and David Millar, from Dundee.

sion of the synod, in April 1746, were parties, and had no right to vote upon this question. To this it was replied, that the present question referred to the order of procedure, and was altogether distinct from the one upon which the protest had been taken. It was further urged, that, even in voting on their own proposal, they were not parties, because it was one thing, they contended, for the synod to give a decision on any point, and another thing to make that decision a term of communion. Unless this were conceded, it would necessarily follow, that all decisions of synods are *ipso facto* terms of communion. This point of order being conceded, and the vote being taken on the above question, it carried by a majority of twenty-nine to twenty-two, that the first motion should be proposed to the house for judgment, before that the reasons of protest, and the answers, were considered. From this decision Mr. Campbell dissented, and Messrs. Thomas Mair and Moncrieff adhered to his dissent, "with a craving that the door might be open, at next sederunt, for carrying this testimony farther, as they should see cause."

When the synod met on the forenoon of the following day (the ninth), the question, which the synod had voted on the previous night should next be decided, was resumed; and a vote concerning it proposed. Whereupon Mr. Thomas Mair declared his adherence to his former dissent from this resolution, "craving liberty still, to carry this testimony farther as he should see cause;" in which declaration he was joined by Messrs. Moncrieff, Gib, James Thomson, Clarkson, Scot, Brown, Campbell, Whyte, Murray, Archibald, and William Mair, ministers; with ten elders. Notwithstanding this, the brethren who were opposed to the decision formerly given, still insisted that the question should be put, whether said decision should be a term of communion or not. Mr. Gib then laid, in his own name and in the name of all who should adhere to him, the following protestation upon the synod's table:—

"Whereas, the Reverend Synod did yesternight resolve by a vote, that instead of proceeding to call for the *Reasons* of protestation against their sentence in April 1746, about a religious clause of some burgess oaths, with the *Answers* to said reasons, for being read and considered, they would proceed unto a vote upon the following question, viz. *Whether the decision anent the religious clause in some burgess oaths, passed by this Synod in April 1746, shall now or afterwards be made a term of ministerial and Christian communion, aye and until the making of the same to be so, shall be referred by way of overture unto presbyteries and kirk-sessions, in order to their giving their judgment thereanent: that so there may, in the meantime, be a friendly dealing among the members of this Sy-*

*nod with one another, in a way of conference and prayer, in order to their coming, through the Lord's pity, to see eye to eye in the matter of said religious clause, or not?* And whereas the putting the foresaid question to a vote, is still and at great length, insisted for, according to the resolution of yesternight : I, Adam Gib, minister of the gospel in the Associate Congregation at Edinburgh, do hereby, in mine own name, and in the name of all in this synod who shall herein adhere unto me, protest against putting the foresaid question to a vote ; and that it ought to be thrown *simpliciter* out of the minutes, with all that has passed thereupon ; that so the synod may proceed regularly in their proper business : Because this question was irregularly thrust in upon the synod at first, and has all along been irregularly pushed, unto the turning of them aside from their proper business and duty : And because the question proceeds upon a resolution of yesternight, suppressing proper light about the subject of the question, to be had from a consideration of the above-mentioned Reasons and Answers : And because the question is laid and calculated for imposing upon and perverting the judgment of members ; seeing the manifest scope thereof, as laid and insisted upon, is to set the names and pleasures of men in the room of truth and duty in this affair : And because this question is for introducing a sinful and dangerous innovation of subjecting the lawful decision of synod, upon a controversy of faith and case of conscience, unto the consultation of inferior judicatories, particularly kirk-sessions : And because an affirmative upon this question must run upon a toleration-scheme, in direct opposition to the Lord's word, and presbyterian principles ; by judicially allowing, at least for a time, the swearing contradictory oaths ; one homologating all the public defections and corruptions of the day, which we testify against : and the other condemning all these, as grounds of the Lord's controversy to be testified against : With other reasons that may be added in due time. And protesting for liberty to enlarge upon the foresaid with other reasons, as I shall find myself in duty and conscience obliged ; I hereupon take instruments."

To this protestation all the above-mentioned ministers, with the exception of Mr. Scot and Mr. William Mair, adhered.

After a protracted discussion, the synod adjourned for an hour, and met again at eight o'clock in the evening, when the same scenes of angry contention were renewed. Several members, among whom was the moderator, Mr. James Mair, afraid that, if the question were pushed to a vote in the present excited state of the house, a rupture would be the consequence, urged a delay. Others were of opinion, that after the discus-

sions which had taken place, a delay would be productive of no good result, and insisted that the vote should be taken. When the question was about to be put, Mr. Moncrieff gave in the following protestation:—"Whereas, notwithstanding of protestation regularly entered to the contrary, the Reverend Synod is going on to a vote upon this question, viz. *Whether the decision anent the religious clause in some burgess oaths, passed by this Synod in April 1746, shall now or afterward be made a term of communion, aye and until the making of the same to be so, &c.* I; Alexander Moncrieff, minister of the gospel at Abernethy, do, in mine own name, and in the name of all who shall herein adhere unto me, Protest, that this meeting is not, nor ought to be, held and reputed a due and lawfully constituted meeting of the Associate Synod *in this step*: Because they are proceeding upon a resolution of yesternight, which suppresses proper light upon the subject of the question, while many members were never present at any judicial examination thereof; and some have been complaining, that they are precluded from necessary acquaintance therewith: And because, notwithstanding of much insisting to the contrary, the members protesting against the sentence of the Synod in April 1746, who are necessarily and directly parties upon the question, are sustaining themselves judges for voting in it: And protesting for liberty to enlarge the above reasons, and to carry on this testimony as I shall find myself in duty and conscience obliged; I here upon take instruments."

All the ministers who had previously concurred in Mr. Mair's dissent, together with Mr. Patrick Matthew, and ten elders, adhered to this protest. The question was then put, and it carried, That the decision of the Synod in April 1746, shall not be made a term of ministerial and Christian communion, "aye and until the making of the same to be so shall be referred by way of overture unto presbyteries and kirk-sessions, in order to their giving their judgment thereanent," &c. Of fifty-five members who were present,\* only twenty (*nine ministers and eleven elders*) voted on this question, and all of them gave their vote in favour of the decision that was carried; twenty-three (*thirteen ministers and ten elders*) having previously protested against putting the question, did not consider themselves at liberty to give any vote; while there were a few who did not vote, because they were anxious that the court should delay, in present circumstances, coming to a final decision in the matter.

Immediately after the vote Mr. Thomas Mair read the following declaration and protestation:—"Whereas this meet-

\* One of the elders had previously left the house, through indisposition.

ing of Synod have now passed a vote and made a resolution upon the affirmative of that question which has been insisted upon, in opposition to a proceeding unto the Reasons of protest against the sentence of Synod in April 1746, with the Answers to said Reasons: And considering the two protestations which have been entered this day, concerning that affair: And considering, that, by the foresaid step, this meeting of Synod have materially dropped the whole testimony among their hands; allowing of, at least for a time, a *material abjuration* thereof: And considering that, beside a considerable number of elders, the majority of ministers in this meeting, who are the proper judges in a controversy of faith and case of conscience, and who could be judges in the present controversy, have been all along, at this meeting, contending for the proper business and duty of the Synod; in opposition to the contrary torrent: Therefore, I Thomas Mair, minister of the gospel at Orwell, do hereby **DECLARE and PROTEST**, That the *lawful authority and power of the Associate Synod is devolved upon*, and must lie in a constitute meeting of the foresaid members, ministers and elders; together with any other members who shall cleave unto them, in a way of confessing what sinful steps and compliances they have fallen into upon this occasion; As likewise I **DECLARE and PROTEST**, That the foresaid members ought, in duty to the Lord and his heritage, to *take up and exercise* the authority and power of the Associate Synod, lawfully and fully devolved upon them as above; and, for this end, to meet to-morrow at ten of the clock forenoon, in Mr. Gib's house, that they may regularly enter upon and proceed in the business of the Synod."\*

After reading this paper, Mr. Mair and the twenty-two protesters who adhered to him left the house. The moderator, pleading indisposition, requested liberty to retire, which was granted, and the chair was occupied by Mr. Ebenezer Erskine. The members that remained, distressed on account of what had taken place, appointed a meeting to be held on the forenoon of the following day for prayer and humiliation, which was done accordingly; and before they finally separated, they appointed a day of fasting and humiliation to be observed in all their congregations, assigning as the reason of such an appointment, that the Lord "had divided them in his anger, and covered the daughter of Zion with a thick cloud, giving them also the wine of astonishment to drink." Without entering on any other business, they adjourned to meet at Stirling in the month of June.

\* Gib's display, vol. ii. p. 55.

All the ministers and elders who had withdrawn from the synod, with the exception of Mr. William Mair who returned home, met on the following forenoon (the 10th April), in Mr. Gib's house, and being constituted by Mr. Thomas Mair, they passed an *Act asserting their constitution and rights according to previous contendings for the same*. In this act they "Find, according to the foresaid DECLARATION and PROTESTATION, That the *lawful authority and power* of the Associate Synod is lawfully and fully devolved upon them, and lies among their hands; That they are the only lawful and rightly constitute Associate Synod, with the said authority and power: And that they are obliged, in duty to the Lord and his heritage, to exercise the same, for supporting and carrying on the Testimony which the Lord has put into the hand of the Associate Synod; in opposition to the material dropping, and allowing of (at least for a time), a material abjuration of that whole Testimony, by the resolutions foresaid, and the method of carrying the same." \*

At another sederunt the same day, they passed a second *Act further asserting the rights and constitution of the Associate Synod*, in which they "Find that none of the ministers and elders, presently in a way of separating from the Associate Synod, through turning aside from the lawful constitution thereof, and from the Testimony among their hands, ought or can return to a seat in this Synod, but in the way of confessing the sinful steps and compliances which they have severally fallen into, about the two resolutions formerly mentioned, and the method of carrying the same: That none of the associate presbyteries can be lawful in their constitutions or proceedings, but in a way of subordination to this Synod: or, at least in a way of waiting until the state of the present cause and controversy be got laid particularly open unto them: — That only those elders of the respective Associate congregations who shall be disposed as above, together with a minister in subordination to this Synod, can make up the lawful and rightly constitute sessions of these congregations: That (seeing the majority of ministers in the Associate presbytery of Glasgow, have been active in carrying on the foresaid resolutions) the said Associate presbytery of Glasgow cannot be lawful in their constitution or proceedings, nor be lawfully acknowledged as such, by any who are cleaving to the Lord's cause and testimony, until the said presbytery shall return unto that cause and testimony, in subordination to this Synod: That none of the ministers or elders foresaid ought or can return unto a seat in either of the other two Associate presby-

\* Acts and Proceedings of the Associate Synod, p. 8.

teries, nor to moderate or sit in any Associate sessions; but in the way of confessing the sinful steps and compliances which they have severally fallen into, about the two resolutions foresaid, and the method of carrying the same: That none of the probationers in the Secession ought or can lawfully preach the gospel, but in subordination to this Synod; nor take appointments for that end, but from presbyteries in due subordination thereto: That the young men presently on trials before the Associate presbytery of Glasgow, for licence to preach the gospel as probationers, ought to be remitted unto one or both of the other two associate presbyteries, for this purpose: And, finally, that (as the foresaid ministers and elders are hereby invited and beseeched, in brotherly love, to return unto their duty, so) the Synod ought in due time, and as the Lord shall clear their way, to consider upon calling them to an account for their conduct foresaid, according to the discipline of the Lord's House; providing they shall not return to this Synod, in the way of confessing the sinful steps and compliances which they have severally fallen into, as above.\*

Having passed these two acts, they adjourned till Tuesday of the following week, which was observed by them in fasting and humiliation; particularly "in confessing our own manifold provocations, failings, and infirmities; with the sinful steps and compliances that have been taken and made on the present occasion, as to the management of the Associate Synod: and likewise in thankful acknowledgment of what pity and direction the Lord has, at the same time, been graciously pleased to manifest for the support of his cause and testimony; as also for calling on the Lord, that he may be graciously pleased to strengthen that which he hath wrought for us."†

On Wednesday forenoon (15th April), they passed an act condemnatory of the motion carried in the synod on the preceding Wednesday, against calling for the Reasons and Answers; this resolution they condemned, "as a step very sinful and dangerous in a way most unreasonable and disorderly." They further agreed, that the Reasons of protest and the Answers thereto, should be read and considered; and they unanimously approved of the Answers, when corrected and amended, "as taking off the pretended force of the Reasons foresaid."† On the following day, they condemn the resolution adopted by the synod, on the preceding Thursday, which occasioned the separation. In their condemnatory sentence, they characterized it as "a step which, though it left the foresaid sentence of April 1746 *formally standing*, was yet a

\* Acts and Proceedings of the Associate Synod, p. 7.

† Gib's Display, vol. ii. p. 77.      ‡ Ibid.

*material reversing* of the same; so that, with awful inconsistency, it enacted and enjoined an allowance, at least for some time, of a practice which has been, and still is found to be, a profanation of the Lord's name, and a material abjuration of his whole cause and testimony among the hands of the Associate Synod."

At the same sederunt, they unanimously passed an *Act concerning the ministers and elders presently in a way of separating from the Associate Synod*: in which they find "that they are highly censurable, and have themselves, by this mal-administration, fallen from all right and title to any *present actual exercise* of the keys of the kingdom of heaven, committed by the Lord Jesus to the office-bearers of his house, aye and until they be sensible of the sinfulness of their above conduct, acknowledging the same to the glory of God, and return unto their duty to him."

The two following questions were also added to their formula, for being put to young men before receiving licence, and to ministers before ordination, viz. "1st, Are you satisfied with, and do you purpose to adhere unto, and maintain the principles about the present civil government, which are declared and maintained in the Associate Presbytery's answers to Mr. Nairn's reasons of dissent, with the defence thereunto subjoined?" "2d, Do you acknowledge and promise subjection to this presbytery, in subordination to the Associate Synod, as presently constituted, in a way of testifying against the sinful management of the prevailing party in the synod, at some of the first diets of their meeting at Edinburgh in April 1747, or other presbyteries in that subordination, as you shall be regularly called; and do you approve of, and purpose to adhere unto and maintain the said testimony in your station and capacity; and do you approve of, and purpose to adhere unto and maintain the sentence of synod in April 1746, concerning the religious clause of some burgess oaths, and that in opposition to all tenets and practices to the contrary?"\*

They appointed extracts from the above acts to be sent to the several presbyteries and sessions; and they ordered a day of fasting and humiliation to be observed in all their congregations. They then adjourned till the month of August.

In consequence of the events detailed in the preceding pages, the Associate Synod became divided into two separate portions, each claiming to be the only lawfully constituted synod of the Secession Church, while each denied to its rival this exclusive claim. From this period till the time of the reunion, these two synods held their meetings separately; and each exercised over that portion of the church which adhered

\* Display, vol. ii. p. 79.

to it, a jurisdiction altogether independent of the other. Though both of them assumed the same title, viz. that of "the Associate Synod," yet distinctive designations suggested by the controversy in which the separation originated, were bestowed upon them in common parlance; and as the appellations were tacitly, though not formally, admitted by themselves, I shall employ them in the subsequent part of the narrative, for the sake of distinguishing the one party from the other, without intending any disparagement to either. That party who approved of the decision of the synod in April 1746, condemning as sinful, and as inconsistent with the Secession testimony, the swearing of the religious clause in certain burghess oaths, were designated "Antiburgher;" the other party who opposed the synod's giving any decision on this question, and who contended that it should be declared not to be a term of communion, were designated "Burgher," and hence these two terms became distinctive of the two synods.

In the farther prosecution of this history, it will be necessary that I give a separate narrative of the proceedings of each synod. But before drawing this chapter to a close, I shall here introduce, in connexion with the events that led to the rupture, a summary account of the course of procedure which the two synods adopted in reference to one another, immediately after the rupture took place. In doing this, I anticipate a little the order of time, that I may not have occasion, in the subsequent part of the narrative, to revert to a subject so unpleasant in itself, and so much calculated to excite painful feelings.

When the Burgher brethren met at Stirling in June, according to their appointment, representations of grievances, and petitions for advice were presented to them from certain elders and members connected with the congregations of Linlithgow, Haddington, and Ceres. The synod delayed giving any particular answer at that time, and desired the petitioners to wait patiently, till matters should come to a farther bearing. A strong desire was expressed by the brethren assembled at this meeting, that some steps should be taken, with a view to bring matters to an amicable settlement, betwixt them and that portion of the synod who adhered to the opposite side; and it was agreed that a communication should be sent, *extra-judicially*, requesting a meeting to be held betwixt the two parties for prayer and conference, in order that the breach which had taken place might be healed. The following letter was written by Mr. Ebenezer Erskine, in the name of the brethren, and copies of it were sent to Mr. Thomas Mair and Mr. Gib.\*

\* Act of the Associate Synod, declaring the grounds upon which the supplies were granted, &c.

TO MR. THOMAS MAIR.

*" Stirling, June 19, 1747.*

" R. D. B.—The members of the Associate Synod that met in this place having in the interval of one of their meetings, communed together extrajudicially amidst the circumstances which you and we are brought into in adorable providence; and considering, that whereas it is supposed there are two Associate Synods at present, acting in opposition to one another, what fatal and pernicious consequences this must necessarily have among the people under our inspection, both in this country and elsewhere, is evident, as tending natively to break and rend them to pieces, and consequently marring the success of the gospel, and hindering the progress of witnessing work among them, and opening the mouths of enemies against the testimony for the covenanted reformation we all equally profess to maintain, and thus hardening the present generation in their atheism, infidelity, and opposition to the way of God and godliness, and to the name and honour of our Lord Jesus Christ.

" Therefore the brethren were unanimously of opinion, that however wide the present breach is made in holy providence between you and them, yet it is their duty to pursue peace with their brethren even when it seems to fly from them, and to endeavour that no mean be neglected on their part for healing the breach, and preventing the continuation of such a dismal rupture. For this end, they agree to propose unto you, that there be a meeting betwixt you and them, in order to prayer and conference, for trying whether it is possible we can be brought to coalesce in the unity of the Spirit, and the bond of peace, and for endeavouring, as it becomes those that love the truth and peace, to be found (in the use of such appointed means) waiting upon him who is the God of peace, that can bruise Satan under their feet, and saying, ' Come and let us return unto the Lord, for he hath torn, and he will heal us; he hath smitten, and will bind us up.' That the design of the foresaid proposal might not be frustrate, the brethren did not choose to make it in a judicial way, nor intend the conference should be upon the footing of church authority, but merely as brethren equally bound, by our covenant of peace and love, to cultivate harmony in the Lord, that his name may yet be honoured among us, his people cemented, and his work advanced. This, in the name, and at the desire of the brethren here, is from R. D. B. yours most affectionately in the Lord,

*" BRENNER ESKINE."*

" P. S.—With submission it is proposed, that the time and place of meeting be at Dunfermline, Tuesday the 21st July. Your answer is expected as soon as possible, that in case the motion is refused, I may have access to prevent the unnecessary up-coming of the brethren at that time.

" I need not add, in regard the nature of the thing bears it, that this be communicated to all the brethren in connexion with you on your side of the river. Another copy of what is above is sent to Mr. Gib, to be communicated to the brethren concerned on the south side of the Forth."

Mr. Mair's answer to this communication is dated at Muckhart, June 24, 1747, and is to the following effect:—

" R. and D. B.—I received your missive, which I communicated to the brethren who were met here. We are heartily sorry for the present posture of affairs, but desire to adore the Lord in his dispensations of providence, hoping that, though they are humbling to us, yet by them he will exalt himself. The affair you write of, concerns the Associate Synod; and the method of coalescence you mention, or the way of being received back to a seat in the synod, is notour to you, and the brethren with you from the acts and proceedings of the synod; from all which it is easy to learn how you are to apply your-

selves unto them, at their meeting, the first Tuesday of August next. Though it is our endeavour to pray heartily for you every day, and although we do maintain all due regard to you and the brethren, yet your proposals are absolutely inconsistent with supporting the testimony of the day, which we could show from many reasons, most of which, we believe, may easily occur to yourselves, and which we forbear to narrate particularly, lest it should rather prove irritating, than a mean of softening you. Wishing the Lord may incline you to fall in with the healing measures laid down in the acts of the synod, and make you sensible how far you have increased your fault, by constituting yourselves unwarrantably into a pretended synod, and offering dutiful respects to you, and the brethren with you: This in name, and at the desire, of all the brethren here, is all at present, from R. and D. B., your affectionate brother, and humble servant in the Lord,

“THOMAS MAIR.”

Mr. Gib's reply to the same communication, was couched in the following terms :—

“Edinburgh, July 11, 1747.

“V. R. D. F.—Having received your letter of June 19th, and having embraced the first proper occasion for communicating the same to my brethren concerned on this side of the river, by doing so betwixt sederunts, to such of them as met here this week in Presbytery, the answer now made is common.

“As to the mournful circumstances which we are brought into with some dear fathers and brethren, we desire both to seek and submit to the healing thereof in all suitable ways; but we have no freedom to fall in with the proposal made by the brethren you speak of; considering, on the one hand, that they have plainly interwoven with their proposal an assertion of their synodical constitution, a justification of their conduct in the present affair, and a condemnation of the Associate Synod; and considering on the other hand, that the affair writ of is the Synod's work which is *hactenus judicata*, so that the method of coalescence is already concluded upon.

“But not choosing to enlarge here, the above is offered, and in name of the brethren foresaid, with dutiful respects to the brethren with you, by V. R. D. F. yours regardfully,

“ADAM GIB.”

The next meeting of the Burgher Synod was held at Dunfermline, in the month of September. At this meeting, petitions were laid before them, from the elders and members of the congregations that had applied to them, in the month of June, earnestly requesting that the brethren would send them a supply of preaching, and appoint an ordained minister to baptize their children. As the synod were unwilling to do any thing that might widen the breach which had been already occasioned, they delayed, for the present, granting a supply of sermon *within the bounds of congregations*, where ministers were ordained, but agreed that the petitioners, upon producing proper testimonials, might have church privileges dispensed to them, *without the bounds of their respective congregations*. They further recommended to the people of these congregations, that they ought not to forsake their stated places of worship, or withdraw themselves abruptly from their ministers, without previously stating to them the reasons which induced them to do so.

At a *pro re nata* meeting, held at Stirling, in the following month, they passed an "*Act declaring the nullity of the pretended synod, that first met in Mr. Gib's house in Bristo, near Edinburgh, April 10, 1747.*" The following is a summary of the reasons assigned in the act, for pronouncing this condemnatory sentence.

1. The meeting was not lawfully indicted by the Moderator, as the mouth of the synod, but by a private brother, without liberty sought or given, or any motion made to know the mind of the synod in the matter.

2. It was indicted to meet on a sudden, even within a few hours, that is, at ten o'clock next day, in Mr. Gib's house.

3. The synod was already lawfully constituted, before these brethren withdrew; and neither the Moderator nor clerk of synod, regularly chosen by the vote of the synod, were present in that foresaid meeting.

4. Elders are elected by their several sessions, as commissioners to the synod; but these brethren separated themselves from the synod, and constituted without the consent of the sessions whom they represented, and therefore could not represent them in a pretended constitution of synod which the church knew nothing of when they were elected and commissioned.

5. The person who indicted that nominal synod to meet in Mr. Gib's house, as he only called a part, and not the whole of the constituent members of the Associate Synod, so he excluded ministers, and also elders, who were lawfully elected to attend.

6. Because it is not the Associate Synod, to which accessions were made, for a considerable time bygone, by ministers and others.

7. This meeting was called and indicted irregularly, in respect of the circumstances both of time and place, namely, at the time when, and in the place where, the Associate Synod were sitting, regularly constituted in the name of the glorious Head of the Church, the Lord Jesus Christ, whose presence was invoked by the Moderator, as the mouth of the synod.

8. There was no sinful thing required of these brethren; no new or unlawful term of communion imposed on them; no imposition at all put, or so much as proposed to be put, upon them by their brethren, differing from them in their judgment in this matter.

9. At that meeting at which our brethren withdrew, April 9th, the synod was as lawfully constituted as in former meetings; particularly as lawfully as it was April 8th. Now, both sides agree that the former meetings were lawful, and the

separating brethren themselves owned the meeting April 8th, to be lawful.

10. The constitution of said pretended synod is founded upon many grievous calumnies and heavy charges laid against the synod, without the least shadow of proof.

11. The said pretended synod consisted of members who, upon their disorderly separating themselves from the synod, and constituting apart from it, sustained themselves not only judges, but sole judges and condemners of the two votes against which they read their protestations.

12. There is just the same reason for nullifying this pretended synod, and the five acts they mention in the title of their book, that the famous Assembly at Glasgow 1638, give for nullifying the pretended assembly that met at Perth, and the articles that were concluded there, commonly called *The Five Articles of Perth*.\*

When the same brethren met at Stirling in April, 1748, renewed petitions were presented to them from the congregations that had formerly applied for sermon; and in addition to these, representations and petitions were laid on their table from some of the elders and members in connexion with the congregations of Perth, Abernethy, and Edinburgh, complaining of the disagreeable situation in which they were placed, in consequence of the divided state of sentiment both in the sessions and in the congregations; and requesting that the synod would send them a separate supply of sermon. After some consideration, the synod delayed giving a final answer to the petitioners, until a *pro re nata* meeting, which they appointed to be held at Falkirk on the twenty-fourth of May; and, in the mean time, they agreed that another attempt should be made to effect a reconciliation with their former fellow-labourers. The following letter being approved of by the meeting, a copy was appointed to be sent by the moderator to each of the brethren.†

“ *Stirling, April 15, 1748.*

“ R. D. B.—The synod met in this place, considering that several petitions for preaching have come before them from time to time, importing that you and your brethren that have separated from the synod, have gone off from the grounds upon which you and we made secession from the present backsliding judicatories, and upon which the petitioners accede to the Associate judicatories, and submitted to your ministry; and that though deserting these grounds, some of you have upon the matter, deserted your flocks, and thrust them away from you, by imposing new terms of communion upon them, not warranted in the word of God; and that you have gone into several disorderly and divisive practices, whereby the Lord's heritage is much shattered and broken :

\* The Re-exhibition of the Testimony, p. 265.

† Act of the Associate Synod, declaring the grounds upon which supplies were granted, &c.

Therefore, the synod, before they appoint supply to these in your respective congregations, who have made complaints to us, have appointed me to acquaint you, that the synod is to meet at Falkirk upon Tuesday the twenty-fourth day of May next, and to require, and earnestly desire, that you and your brethren (to each of whom a letter in these same words is sent), may attend the said meeting, that so there may be a friendly conference with prayer, upon the present differences that have taken place among ministers and people of the Association, particularly relating to the subject of the above-named petitions; whereby you may evidently see the lenity of the synod, and their desire of peace and unity in the Lord. This in name, and by the appointment of the Associate Synod, is subscribed in their presence, by R. D. B., yours affectionately,

"DAVID HORN, *Moderator.*"

None of the brethren, to whom this letter was sent, attended the meeting at Falkirk, and the synod agreed, that, after such a long delay, they should now "grant supply of preaching to the petitioners within the congregations of the separating brethren, applying to them, notwithstanding they had not proceeded to inflict any ecclesiastical censure upon these brethren." In vindication of their conduct they framed and published an act, detailing at considerable length their reasons for adopting such a course of procedure. After this they made no farther proposals to their brethren with a view to conciliation; neither did they attempt exercising toward them any ecclesiastical discipline.

The Antiburgher synod having met at Edinburgh, according to their appointment, in the beginning of August 1747, took into consideration what discipline they would inflict on their Burgher brethren, having formerly declared them deserving of censure. The result of their deliberation, at this and two subsequent meetings of synod, was a resolution to serve these brethren with a libel; and they summoned them to appear at the bar of their synod, in the month of April 1748: The libel contained the following charges, drawn up in seven different articles:—

First, that Messrs. Ebenezer Erskine, Ralph Erskine, James Fisher, William Hutton, David Horn, Henry Erskine, and John M'Cara did protest against the decision of the synod, in April 1746, condemning the present swearing of the religious clause in some burgess oaths; and did afterwards give in their reasons of protest, "in a style and strain most indecent and undutiful, and containing false charges against the synod in plain matters of fact."

Second, that they had, in one of their reasons of protest, vented and maintained a tenet of mutual forbearance, authorizing the toleration of known and acknowledged sin.

Third, that the above ministers, together with Messrs. Andrew Black, John Smith, and David Telfar, had pushed the first resolution (viz. to have a vote of the house upon the

questions proposed by them, before calling for the reasons of protest), which was a secret thrust aimed at the decision of 1746; and that the ministers mentioned in the first article had violently sustained themselves judges in said question.

Fourth, that all of them had been active in voting the second resolution (viz. that the decision of 1746 should not be a term of communion, until referred to presbyteries and sessions), and had "thereby virtually dropped the whole testimony for reformation as among the hands of the synod; giving allowance, at least for a time, for a renunciation thereof by oath."

Fifth, that the ministers first mentioned had constituted themselves into a synod at Stirling, in the month of June 1747, in a way of separating from the rightly constitute Associate synod to which they belonged; thus engaging in a schismatical constitution for support of their foresaid back-sliding course.

Sixth, that Messrs. James Mair, William Hutton, Andrew Black, James Johnston, John Smith, and David Telfar, beside the several articles charged upon them as above, are art and part guilty in the whole of the articles charged upon their brethren; inasmuch as they have neither separated themselves from them, nor borne testimony against their offences.

Seventh, that Messrs. Ebenezer Erskine, Ralph Erskine, James Fisher, and John M'Cara, had framed and published pamphlets, in some of which they censured the decision of synod in April 1746, and in others, condemned the constitution in Mr. Gib's house in April 1747; and that the whole of the ministers mentioned in the above articles, had been guilty of framing and publishing an act, in their pretended synodical capacity, declaring null and void the constitution and proceedings of the synod that met in Mr. Gib's house.\*

When the synod met in April, none of the ministers into whose hands the above libel was put, made their appearance. They were accordingly declared contumacious; and all the articles of the libel were found relevant, if proven, to infer censure. On the third day of the meeting, Mr. William Hutton came into court, and craved leave to read a paper which, he stated, contained his sentiments on the subject, though he acknowledged that it was not in the form of answers to the articles of the libel. Permission being given him to read it, he introduced himself with a verbal declaration, "that he had retracted his protest against the decision of the synod in April 1746, concerning the religious clause in some bur-

\* Gib's Display, vol. ii. p. 282.

gress oaths, and that he was not now to be considered as standing in opposition to that decision : And, further, that he could not approve of the transmission in the second resolution or vote, which had been productive of so much mischief, being of the mind that it ought to have been dropped for the sake of peace, besides other objections which he had against it, and which he could state to any of the ministers in private."

His paper was then read, in which he attacked, in severe terms, the constitution and proceedings of the synod, before which he appeared, pronouncing their conduct to be schismatical and disorderly, charging them with excluding ruling elders from their just privileges, and with exacting a blind and implicit submission to all their acts and proceedings. He concluded by declaring, that he did not now appear before them as a pannel, in consequence of the citation that had been given him, but from a conscientious conviction that it was his duty to use such freedom with his fathers and brethren, as not to suffer sin to lie upon them; and, finally, that he was resolved to continue in the exercise of his ministry, notwithstanding any sentences that might be passed against him; averring, that as they could not be binding in heaven, so they should by him be held null and void.

Mr. Hutton, after having read his paper, withdrew; and the synod found that his present conduct, in bringing such charges against them, was highly censurable. At a subsequent sederunt they deposed him from the office of the holy ministry, and excommunicated him from the communion of the church in all its sealing ordinances, with certification, that if he did not return unto his duty, and apply to the synod with a view to give satisfaction for the whole of his sinful conduct, they would proceed against him by the highest censure of the church. All the articles of the libel were found proven against the other ministers in their material points, and they were accordingly suspended from the exercise of their ministry, with certification, that still higher censures would be inflicted on them, if they did not at next meeting of synod make due acknowledgment for their past misconduct.

In the month of August the Antiburgher Synod again met, when all the ministers formerly libelled were deposed from the office of the holy ministry, and suspended from the enjoyment of their privileges as members of the church, "with certification, that if they shall not return unto their duty, acknowledging unto the glory of God the several matters of heinous sin and scandal found proven against them, with their contumacy at last meeting, and their further contumacy in not compearing at this meeting, and apply unto the synod, at their ordinary meeting in April next year, for

giving satisfaction with regard to the whole of this their sinful course and conduct, the synod will then consider upon proceeding against them with the highest censure of the church, as they shall see cause.\* They appointed intimation of this sentence to be made in all the congregations of these ministers, declaring the same to be now vacant.

At the meeting of the synod in April, 1749, the members reviewed their own conduct, in reference to the transactions which had taken place. Having found much in their temper and conduct that was sinful, they made mutual acknowledgments of guilt to one another, and underwent, in rotation, the ceremony of a rebuke. As the practice of *privy censures* in ecclesiastical courts has now become obsolete, I shall here extract from the narrative of one who was present, the following account given by him, of the course of procedure pursued in the present instance;—premising that such a practice is much more honoured in the breach than in the observance. The matter, viewed in the light either of reason or of scripture, appears to be altogether anomalous,—that the guilty should receive the confession of the guilty,—that the guilty should judge, rebuke, and absolve the guilty; and that after having done this, the judges should take the place of the culprits, and the culprits take the place of the judges, and rebuke and absolve those by whom they had themselves been previously rebuked and absolved. We have seen, in a former part of this history, that the members of the Associate Presbytery inflicted such censures upon one another soon after their separation from the National Church, on account of certain omissions with which they were mutually chargeable. A similar ceremonial was gone through on the present occasion.

“On this occasion,” says Mr. Gib,† “seven of the ministers, Messrs. Alexander Moncrieff, Thomas Mair, Adam Gib, William Campbell, David Smyton, John Erskine, and Andrew Thomson, underwent a rebuke. The first four for offensive heat of temper and unadvisedness of language on several occasions, when debates happened in the synod; and the other three for some former engagements in the course of the separating brethren, both before and after the breach. And those seven, with other nine, Messrs. James Thomson, Andrew Clarkson, Patrick Matthew, James Scott, George Brown, John Whyte, George Murray, and William Mair, ministers, with John Wilson, elder from Dunse, underwent an admonition for those staggerings and short-comings at the meetings of synod in September 1746, and April 1747, which

\* Display, vol. ii. p. 94.

† Ibid. p. 95.

have been formerly explained; as did also Mr. Robert Archibald, when he came up on the following week. After which a suitable exhortation was given to seven other brethren who had not then belonged to the synod, viz. Messrs. John Muckersie at Kinkell, Alexander Blyth at Kinclaven, David Wilson at Kirkaldy, John Milligan at Orr, Matthew Moncrieff at Abernethy, William Moncrieff at Alloa, and John Goodlet at Sanquhar, with fourteen other elders now present.

"This course of privy censure took place, upon a motion made and agreed unto for that purpose; so that the members who underwent a rebuke and admonition, rose up in their several turns, and made voluntary acknowledgments, none laying any thing to the charge of another; and the whole was concluded in a diet of confession and prayer, relative to these sinful steps and compliances, staggerings, and shortcomings, which had taken place among them.

"Nor was this the first time that they had become sensible of, and professed humiliation for, the evils now acknowledged by them. As they had been generally employed the same way, on several occasions formerly: in a diet of confession and prayer at their first sederunt after the breach; and in a synodical fast on the Tuesday then following; as also, in a diet of confession and prayer, before the first proceeding to censure, beside the acknowledgments made by some brethren, at their return to the synod, all represented in the foregoing part of their procedure. But they thought it proper, at this time, to have these matters particularly brought forth, and proceeded upon, as above, for the glory of God, and for self-abasement, suited to the humbling work now among their hands, and as a standing testimony against these falls and failings which they had been led to, through heaviness of spirit, and darkness about their way."

Nothing was done at this meeting, with regard to the brethren who had been libelled, except entering a resolution upon the record, that they would take up the question, at their next meeting in August, about inflicting on all or some of them, the highest censures of the church. Accordingly, when the synod met in the month of August, this business was again resumed, and Messrs. Ralph Erskine, James Fisher, and William Hutton, were selected from among the rest, on account of special aggravations connected with their case; and the sentence of the greater excommunication was, with all due formality, passed against them; which sentence the Moderator, after a sermon suitable to the occasion, pronounced *in verbis de presenti*. The other brethren, viz. Messrs. Ebenezer Erskine, James Mair, David Horn, Henry Erskine, John M'Cara, Andrew Black, James

Johnston, John Smith, and David Telfar, had a similar sentence passed against them in the month of February 1750; and intimation was appointed to be made of these censures, within the several congregations with which these ministers were connected. Mr. Patrick Matthew, minister at Midholm, entered his dissent against the synod's adopting such severe measures; and having, in the course of the same year, withdrawn from the synod, and joined the Burgher brethren, a similar censure was, after a course of process, inflicted on himself.

To say any thing that might have the effect of reviving a controversy which has long been consigned to oblivion, would be unwise. I shall therefore refrain from pronouncing an opinion with regard to the different views held by the opposing parties. That they were conscientious in maintaining these views, there is no reason to doubt; and if, in some respects, they attached an undue importance to them, this was not so much the fault of the men, as the spirit of the times in which they lived. There was certainly nothing blameable in their entertaining different sentiments on the points at issue; and if they had only agreed to differ, all would have been well. But the mischief which the strife occasioned arose, in a great measure, from the unyielding spirit displayed on both sides. This spirit, instead of diminishing, increased with every succeeding debate. Neither party seemed inclined to surrender its favourite opinion, for the sake of coming to a closer agreement with the other; but, according as one or the other possessed a numerical superiority in the house, they availed themselves of their advantage, by pushing a vote in opposition to the remonstrances and protests of those who did not feel themselves at liberty to acquiesce. This mode of procedure was calculated to irritate; and by being continued, meeting after meeting, during the progress of the burghess oath debates, it led at length to a final separation of the parties.

The division of the synod occasioned great confusion throughout the whole of the Associate body. Congregations and sessions were rent asunder by it. Friendships which had existed for a long number of years, were broken up; ministers who had been accustomed to assist one another at sacramental solemnities, no longer associated together on these solemn occasions; the people, distracted by abstruse discussions concerning the revolution-settlement, articles of union, and acts of Parliament, of which they were wholly ignorant, knew not what side to espouse; but, in general, the majority adopted the particular views held by their minister. Lawsuits respecting the property (where the congregation

were divided in opinion), ensued over the whole country; and, as the parties were not recognised in law, as legally constituted bodies, the judges usually gave their decisions in favour of that party to which the majority of the congregation adhered. Both from the pulpit and the press, the one party indulged in declamation against the other. Such a state of things could not but have an unfavourable effect upon religion. Bitter feelings were engendered, and unholy passions were called into play by the strife. There is one consolation, however, which we enjoy in looking back to this distressing period, and that is, the consolation of knowing that the gospel continued to be purely and faithfully preached by the ministers on both sides of the Secession; and that the dispute which tore them asunder did not embrace in it the essentials of religion.

The controversy, after having raged with considerable fury for a number of years, gradually exhausted itself. The original combatants dropped, one by one, into the grave; and those who rose up to occupy their place, however decided they might be in maintaining the particular sentiments which they espoused, yet could not be supposed to engage with the same ardour in the contest. After a certain period had elapsed the storm subsided into a calm. With the exception of a solitary pamphlet which now and then dropped from the pen of a partizan, and the repetition of a few standard phrases on particular occasions, little was either said or done to perpetuate the remembrance of the strife. Each party got into a track of its own, and pursued it steadily, aiming at doing all the good in its power; and, though the one synod in its efforts to enlarge the circle of its influence, occasionally crossed the path of the other, yet a feeling of cordiality gradually gained ground. A train of favourable events brought the members more into contact with one another; and, after a separation of nearly eighty years, as we shall have occasion more particularly to notice in a subsequent part of this history, the two synods exhibited to the Christian world the noble spectacle of being again united into one.

## PART II.

### CONTAINING THE HISTORY OF THE SECESSION FROM THE BREACH IN THE SYNOD TILL THE PERIOD OF THE RE-UNION.

HAVING now to record the proceedings of two Secession Synods, instead of one, this part of the narrative will run in two different streams. In one of these I shall give an account of the transactions of the General Associate, or, as it was ordinarily termed, *Antiburgher* Synod ; and in the other I shall give an account of the transactions of the Associate, or, as it was ordinarily termed (by way of distinction from its rival), *Burgher* Synod. Regarding it as a matter of indifference which of these accounts is given first in order, I shall, out of courtesy to my brethren, with whom I consider it an honour to be united, give the precedence in the narrative to the transactions of the General Associate Synod.

## CHAPTER VII.

### HISTORY OF THE GENERAL ASSOCIATE (OR ANTIBURGH) SYNOD.

State of affairs in the Scottish Church—Increased power of the moderate party—"Riding committees" abolished—Presbytery of Linlithgow proves contumacious—Rebuked at the bar of the Assembly—Presbytery of Dunfermline refuses to ordain Mr. Richardson—Case of Mr. Gillespie of Carnock—Application by the General Assembly for an increase in their "livings"—Opposed by the Scottish counties—Rejected by Government—Lesson of humility taught—Constitution of the Synod in Mr. Gib's house—Members present—Proceedings against Mr. Nairn—Mr. Nairn deposed and excommunicated—Novel scene—Mr. Nairn returns to the National Church—Makes a humble confession—Is rebuked in the Kirkaldy Presbytery—Questions of casuistry submitted to the Synod—Advice given concerning the payment of taxes for the support of the Episcopal church—Application from Pennsylvania for sermon—Missionaries sent to America—Philosophical class at Abernethy—Act of the Synod concerning Arminianism—Outline of the Act—Mr. Thomas Mair objects to some of the articles in it—Mr. Mair charged with holding erroneous opinions—Dealings with Mr. Mair—Mr. Mair suspended from the exercise of his ministry—Deposed and excommunicated—Solemn warning published by the Synod—Extracts from it—Proposal to address the King on the state of religion—Proposal rejected—Mr. Gib's remarks upon it—Overture to present a congratulatory address to George III. at his accession—Overture laid aside—Declarations of the Synod on the subject—Death of Mr. Alexander Moncrieff—His character—His son Mr. William Moncrieff elected Professor of Divinity—Missionary spirit of the Synod—Enactment on this subject—Society in Scotland for propagating Christian Knowledge—Makes application to the Synod for assistance in evangelizing the North American Indians—Application favourably received—Fund for support of widows—Liberality of the Synod's congregations.

If the state of affairs in the Establishment was bad at the commencement of the Secession, it had become still worse at the period of the breach. The quarrels of the Seceders afforded a favourable opportunity to those who took the lead, in conducting the affairs of the General Assembly, to have regained their lost influence with the people; and if their management had been characterized by ordinary prudence, they might at this period have given a check to the progress of the Secession, from which it would not speedily have recovered. For it is natural to suppose that the minds of many, who were previously disposed to regard with a favourable eye the conduct of the Seceders, must have been considerably soured by their contentions, during the long-continued discussions of the burgh oath question, and by their treatment of one another after the separation had taken place. And that, notwithstanding

these proceedings, the Secession should still have continued to prosper, multiplying rapidly the number of its congregations, and swelling its list by the addition of new adherents, shows how grievous the yoke of patronage must have been felt by the people, and how oppressive the treatment which they received from their ecclesiastical rulers, when they forsook the national church, bedecked as it was with so many lordly honours, and took shelter in the bosom of the Secession, even in the midst of its wranglings. Before entering upon the transactions of the General Associate Synod, it will be proper that I take a view of the state of matters in the Establishment at this period; and after considering it, no surprise will be felt by any that the Secession should still have continued to prosper, in spite of the temporary injury which it sustained by the disruption of the synod.

One effect which the existence of the Secession had upon those who were connected with the Established Church, was, that it rendered them more determined than ever in their opposition to the law of patronage. "When the people saw," says a late writer,\* "that they had a ready access to ministers of their own selection, in Seceding meetings, the opposition to presentees became more inveterate and unmanageable; and it was soon found to be a matter of extreme difficulty and embarrassment, in the church courts, to decide between the patrons and the people, without sacrificing to either what, by one party at least, was held to be the constitutional law of the church, or of the state." Previous to the passing of the unpopular act of 1732, and for some time after, a considerable portion of the clergy of the Church of Scotland contended for the right of the parishioners at large, or at least of the heads of families, to have a voice in the choosing of their ministers; while there was a still larger portion, who maintained that the right of calling was limited to heritors and elders. None as yet had the hardihood to avow, that a call was not necessary to give effect to a presentation. Patronage, however, soon brought forth its proper fruits. By means of it, a class of men were introduced into the church, who, whatever might be their talents or literary attainments, were certainly most determined enemies of popular rights. The doctrine which they taught in the pulpit to the listless hearers, was a species of morality *sui generis*; it could neither be called Christian nor heathen, but was a compound of both: and their ecclesiastical administration was founded on the principle, not of redressing grievances, or remedying abuses, but of silencing complaints by mere dint of authority, and crushing by the strong arm of

\* Sir Henry Moncrieff Wellwood, Bart.

power all resistance to their arbitrary decrees. Instead of being servants to the church for Christ's sake, they were "lords over God's heritage."

This class, who styled themselves the *moderate party* (for what reason it is difficult to divine), were stern expounders of the law of patronage. According to their interpretation of it, a call was an unnecessary appendage to a presentation. Indeed the term *call* was gradually laid aside by them as obsolete, and in its room was substituted the more fashionable word *concurrence*. But whether there was a call or concurrence, or not, the people were obliged to submit to the hirelings thrust in upon them by the patrons. The principle which the party avowed, and which they ultimately succeeded in establishing, was, that a presentation to a benefice was in all cases to be made effectual, "without any reservation founded on the merits of the call or on the number of heritors, elders, or parishioners, who concurred or dissented."\* This beautiful system of settling ministers, in vacant parishes, without any regard to the wishes or opposition of the people, was not brought to a state of perfection all at once. It was not till Dr. William Robertson, the celebrated historian, succeeded to the chief management of church affairs, in 1763, that it received the finishing touch. During the time that he swayed the sceptre in the General Assembly, the struggles with the people were incessant, and the opposition to the presentees was of such a determined kind, that the time of the Assembly was almost wholly occupied with business of this description; and some of the settlements in dispute were protracted for eight or ten years.† He finally succeeded, however, in establishing the doctrine, that a call was not necessary to effect a settlement; and the people, finding, from dear bought experience, that their applications for relief to the Assembly were almost uniformly unsuccessful, at last gave up the contest as hopeless.

"The language of the majority in Assemblies, at this time," says the writer already quoted, "universally was, that the secession from the church, instead of increasing, was on the decline; and that the superior character and talents of the established clergy were gradually weakening its resources, and would ultimately exhaust them. Experience has not verified these sanguine expectations. At the distance of a few years after Dr. Robertson retired, the people, disgusted with unsuccessful processes before the Assembly, relinquished the plan of their predecessors, and came seldom to the Assembly with appeals from the sentences of the inferior courts, appointing

\* Appendix to Life of Dr. Erskine, by Sir H. Moncrieff Wellwood, Bart. p. 464.

† Ibid. 465.

the settlement of presentees whom they resisted. But they began to do more quietly, or with less observation, than formerly, what was not less unfriendly to the Establishment. In ordinary cases, they now leave the church courts to execute their sentences without opposition, and set themselves immediately to rear a meeting-house, which very frequently carries off a large portion of the inhabitants of the parish. The bustle in Assemblies is in a great measure over, or a disputed settlement no longer creates any serious interest or division in the church courts. But the silent increase of seceding meetings has gradually weakened and contracted the influence of the Establishment on the general population."

At the period of the breach in the Secession Synod, matters had not yet reached this crisis in the Established Church, but they were hastening rapidly onward to it. From 1740 to 1760, that portion of the clergy who contended for the right of the people to choose their pastors, were fast disappearing from the stage, and their places were as fast filling up by persons of the sentiments above described. Parties in the General Assembly thus gradually underwent a change to the worse. Instead of contending for the right of the people to choose their ministers, the *popular party* took up the ground formerly occupied by the moderates, and contended for nothing more than that a call from the heritors and elders was necessary to constitute the foundation of the pastoral relation. The *moderate party*, on the other hand, contended, that though it was desirable, for the sake of encouraging the presentee, to obtain a call or *concurrence* from as many of the heritors and elders, and other parishioners, as chose to subscribe one, yet even this formality was not necessary. In so far as the people were concerned, it was a matter of indifference which of these two parties had the ascendancy; for the doctrine of the one interfered as much with their Christian liberty as the doctrine of the other. Indeed, the difference betwixt the two was in a great measure nominal. Those who contended for the necessity of a call from the heritors and elders, found no difficulty in giving effect, by means of the influence of patrons and of non-resident heritors, to the most unpopular presentations; and in point of fact, the number of *violent settlements* was not less, when the doctrine of the one party was acted upon, than when the doctrine of the other came to be the acknowledged law.\* Such a state of things as this, in the Established Church, could not but be exceedingly favourable to the Secession.

Very soon after the breach had taken place in the Asso-

\* Moncrieff's *Life of Dr. Erskine*, p. 462.

date Synod, the Assembly altered their mode of appointing committees to carry into effect their unrighteous decisions, in cases where the Presbytery refused to take any part in ordaining a presentee, in opposition to the avowed wishes of the people. For upwards of twenty years, "riding committees" (as they were termed), composed of ministers whose consciences did not trouble them much upon the subject, had been appointed to perform this disagreeable service; and those members of Presbytery whose conscientious scruples did not permit them to be present at the ordination of a minister in such circumstances, were exempted from attending. This indulgence it was resolved no longer to grant. In 1750, a reference was made by the Assembly to their Commission, "to consider of a method for securing the execution of the sentences of the Assembly and Commission, and to prepare an overture thereanent to be laid before next General Assembly; and, in case Presbyteries shall be disobedient to any of the sentences of this Assembly, in the particular causes which have been determined by them, the General Assembly empowers their Commission to call such Presbyteries before them, and censure them as they shall see cause."<sup>\*</sup>

After this period, Presbyteries were authoritatively required to carry into effect the decisions of the supreme court, however offensive they might be to the people, or whatever scruples they themselves might have as to the justice of them. The doctrine of non-resistance and of passive obedience was never carried to a higher pitch, by any despot, or by any society of men, than it was, at this time, by the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland. This despotic exercise of ecclesiastical authority excited disgust both in ministers and people; and the attempts which were speedily made to compel refractory Presbyteries to yield compliance, considerably swelled the ranks of the Seceders; and, in addition to this, gave birth, ere long, to a new class of separatists.

The first case of disobedience that came under the review of the Assembly, was that of the Presbytery of Linlithgow, against whom a complaint was brought by Lord Torphichen, the patron, and other heritors of the parish of Torphichen, that they refused to execute a sentence of the last General Assembly, appointing them to ordain and admit Mr. James Watson, as minister of that parish. After a long discussion, the Assembly resolved that the Presbytery should be censured for their conduct. From this decision, the Reverend Principal Wishart, with twenty-one ministers and one elder, dissented; and, when they gave in the reasons of

<sup>\*</sup> Acts of Assembly, 1750.

dissent, they craved that they might be read, and recorded. This the Assembly would not permit, but ordered the paper to lie *in retentis*.\* The Presbytery having appeared at the bar, and been solemnly rebuked, were enjoined, in concurrence with a committee named, to meet at the church of Torphichen, on a day appointed by the Assembly, and then and there ordain and admit Mr. Watson as minister of the parish; and, should the Presbytery fail again in their duty, by not being present at the meeting, the committee was ordered to proceed to the ordination without them. This was the last instance of a committee being appointed by the Assembly, for such a purpose.

In the course of the same year (1751) a similar case of disobedience occurred, which, on account of its affording a fair specimen of the mode of government that prevailed in the National Church at that period, and on account of the important consequences that resulted from it, deserves to be specially noticed. Mr. Andrew Richardson having received a presentation to the church and parish of Inverkeithing, a strong opposition was made to him by the people; and the case being brought before the Commission that met in the month of November, the Presbytery of Dunfermline were peremptorily enjoined to proceed with his settlement. The Presbytery refused to comply, and the case was again brought before the Commission by complaint at their next meeting. It was moved that the Presbytery should be censured for their conduct, but the motion did not carry. The Commission then appointed the synod of Fife to ordain Mr. Richardson before the beginning of May, and to report their diligence to the next General Assembly. The synod were equally refractory with the Presbytery; and, when the Assembly met in May 1752, a complaint was lodged against both the synod and the Presbytery, for refusing to execute the sentence of the Commission. Certain dissentients also, among whom were Messrs. William Robertson, Hugh Blair, John Home, &c., brought a complaint against the Commission, because they had acquitted the Presbytery when they ought to have censured it.

The Assembly took up this business with great keenness. They found "that the Commission in March had exceeded their powers, and had not done what they were bound to do, conform to the powers given them by the last Assembly." They appointed the Presbytery of Dunfermline to meet at Inverkeithing on Thursday forenoon that same week, at eleven o'clock, to ordain Mr. Richardson minister of that parish. All the members of Presbytery were ordered to

\* Struthers' History of Scotland, vol. ii. p. 576.

attend; and, instead of the legal quorum *three*, it was declared that *five* should be the quorum on that occasion. A special summons was issued to all the ministers, to appear at the bar of the Assembly on Friday forenoon, to give an account of their conduct in this matter.

When the Presbytery gave in their report, it was found that only three ministers had attended at Inverkeithing on the day appointed; and not being a sufficient quorum, they were obliged to separate without executing the work assigned them. Those who had absented themselves being called upon to state their reasons why they had not fulfilled the appointment of the Assembly, various apologies for absence were given by different individuals, which were sustained as valid. The following ministers pled conscientious scruples as the reason why they had not attended, viz. Messrs. Robert Stark, Torryburn; David Hunter, Saline; Alexander Daling, Cleish; John Spence, Orwell; Thomas Gillespie, Carnock; and Thomas Fernie, Dunfermline. These six gave in a written representation to the Assembly, the tenor whereof follows:—"To the very Reverend the Moderator, &c. of the Church of Scotland, met at Edinburgh 1752, the humble representation of the members of the Presbytery of Dunfermline, whose names are hereunto subjoined. We cannot but be deeply affected with our present situation, in being obliged to stand at the bar of this venerable Assembly to answer for non-compliance with any of their appointments; but as this court is so good as to allow us to speak in our behalf, we shall therefore beg leave humbly to represent some of those things which have all along straitened us in the execution of the orders we received, and which still lay such difficulties in our way, as we are not able to surmount. And this we hope to do with that plainness and honesty, and at the same time with that dutiful respect to the supreme judicatory of this church, which it is so justly entitled to expect from us. We need scarcely observe how unjustly we have been represented as having no other difficulty but the unreasonable fear of opposing the ill-grounded prejudices of our people; nor need we inform this house, that ever since the act restoring patronages in the end of Queen Anne's reign, there has been a vehement opposition to all settlements by presentations where there was but small concurrence, which settlements have already produced a train of the most unhappy consequences, greatly affecting the interest of religion, and if turned into the stated and fixed rule of procedure, will, in all probability, be attended with every fatal effect. Now under such a view and apprehension as this, was it any wonder, or was it consistent with that

obedience which we owe to our earthly superiors in the land, that we should demur and stop short in carrying a settlement into execution, where, in our apprehension, there was by no means such a concurrence of persons residing in the parish, as might give sufficient weight and influence for promoting the great ends of the ministry. The Assembly know well, that it appears from their own acts and resolutions entered into their records, that the law of patronage has been considered as no small grievance to this church, not to say as inconsistent with our Union settlement; and we find it declared, act 25th of May, 1736, that it is, and has been since the Reformation, the principle of this church, that no minister shall be intruded into any parish contrary to the will of the congregation; and therefore it is seriously recommended, by the said act, to all judicatories of this church, to have a due regard to the said principle in planting vacant congregations, so as none to be intruded into such parishes, as they regard the glory of God, and the edification of the body of Christ; which recommendation we humbly apprehend to be strongly supported by the principles of reason, and the laws of our Lord Jesus Christ. Permit us to inform the Assembly, that, after repeated endeavours used by committees of the Presbytery, to lessen the opposition to Mr. Richardson, in the parish of Inverkeithing, matters still remain in such a situation, that we are brought to that unhappy dilemma, either of coming under the imputation of disobedience to a particular order of our ecclesiastical superior, or contributing our part to the establishment of measures, which we can neither reconcile with the declared principles, nor with the true interest of this church. On the whole, we cannot help thinking, that, by having an active hand in carrying Mr. Richardson's settlement into execution, we should be the unhappy instruments, as matters now stand, to speak in the language of holy writ, of scattering the flock of Christ, not to mention what might be the fatal consequences of such settlements to our happy civil constitution. If the venerable Assembly shall, on this account, judge us guilty of such criminal disobedience as to deserve their censure, we trust they will at least allow we acted as honest men, willing to forego every secular advantage for conscience' sake. In such an event, this, through grace, shall be our support, that, not being charged with any neglect of the duties of our ministry among those committed to our care, we are to suffer for adhering to what we apprehend to be the will of our great Lord and Master, whose we are, whom we are bound to serve in all things, and on whom we cast all our care."\*

\* Acts of Assembly, 1752.

This representation had no effect in mitigating the resentment of the Assembly. After it was read, the Moderator exhorted the six brethren seriously to consider the situation in which they stood, and to avail themselves of the opportunity now presented of averting the displeasure of the church. They were then asked, one by one, if they had any thing further to offer in their own vindication, when they replied, that they had nothing to add to the representation already given in. The brethren being removed, the Assembly caused read over again their representation; after which they proceeded to deliberate, what censure it would be proper to inflict. It was moved that one of the six brethren be deposed. This motion, after long reasoning, was carried by a considerable majority. Intimation was given to the brethren of this sentence, and they were ordered to attend next day. On the following day (May 23), the Assembly resumed the consideration of this business; and all the brethren having an opportunity given them of again delivering their sentiments, they adhered to their former declaration. The vote was then stated which of the six should be deposed. A large proportion of the Assembly declined giving any vote. Out of fifty-six persons who voted on the occasion, fifty-two voted for the deposition of Mr. Gillespie: And the Moderator of the Assembly proceeded, "In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, the sole King and Head of the Church, and by virtue of the power and authority committed by him to them to depose Mr. Thomas Gillespie, minister at Carnock, from the office of the holy ministry, prohibiting and discharging him to exercise the same, or any part thereof, within this church, in all time coming. And the Assembly did, and hereby do declare the church and parish of Carnock vacant from and after the day and date of this sentence."\* Mr. Gillespie stood at the bar, while the Moderator pronounced upon him this sentence. The following reply, given by Mr. Gillespie on receiving the sentence, is worthy of being recorded:—"Moderator, I desire to receive this sentence of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland with real concern, and awful impressions of the divine conduct in it; but I rejoice that to me it is given, in behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake."

The Assembly took credit to themselves for leniency, in not inflicting a similar sentence upon the other five brethren. They resolved, however, to put their obedience to a still farther test; for they remitted it to the Presbytery to pro-

\* Acts of Assembly, 1752.

ceed with the ordination of Mr. Richardson, on or before the 18th of June. They ordered a correct list of the ministers who should be present to be made up and entered into the minutes of the Presbytery, together with the excuses of those who should be absent. The synod of Fife were enjoined to consider these excuses at their first meeting after the admission and to sustain or reject the same; and the Assembly declared every member of Presbytery who should be absent on the day appointed, and whose excuse should not be sustained by the synod, to be suspended from the exercise of their office in all presbyteries, synods, and general assemblies, "aye and until they shall respectively testify their sorrow for their disobedience to the acts and ordinances of the General Assembly, either to their own Presbytery or Synod, or to any Assembly or Commission thereof." This sentence of suspension was afterwards applied to three of the ministers above mentioned, viz. Mr. David Hunter, Saline; Mr. Alexander Daling, Cleish; and Mr. John Spence, Orwell.

In the following year, a petition was presented to the Assembly from certain heritors, elders, and heads of families in the parish of Carnock, and another from the Presbytery of Dunfermline, praying that the sentence of suspension might be removed from these three brethren, as also the sentence of deposition from Mr. Gillespie. But the Assembly refused to grant the prayer of these petitions, on the ground that no application had been made by the individuals themselves to have their sentences removed. Mr. Gillespie continued to exercise his ministerial functions, notwithstanding his sentence of deposition. He preached for several months in the fields at Carnock, until a place of worship was provided for him by his friends, in the town of Dunfermline; and a few years afterward, he and two other ministers constituted themselves into a Presbytery, under the title of the "Presbytery of Relief."

Such tyrannical proceedings as these, continued year after year, could not but create disgust and disaffection among the best friends of the National Church; and no wonder that many of her most intelligent and pious members fled from her communion, and joined the ranks of the Secession, where, amid the strife that unhappily prevailed at this period, they found the gospel preached in its purity, and a strict regard paid to the rights and privileges of the people.

While the dignitaries of the Establishment were thus busily engaged in converting the Scottish parishes into moral deserts, by forcing, at the point of the bayonet, the settlement of hirelings, whom the people indignantly spurned from them, they most inopportunately chose this period, for making an

application to government to have their livings increased. Though such an application was probably not in itself unreasonable, as the greater part of the stipends throughout Scotland appear, at this time, to have been very inadequate, yet the keenness which they showed in pushing the application, when contrasted with their indifference to the spiritual interests of the people, told much to their disadvantage. Besides, the project of an "augmentation" is at all times an unpopular one, and has seldom failed to excite opposition, even when broached in the most favourable circumstances. There are few things with regard to which men in general are more sensitive, than when an appeal is made to their purses. This will often kindle a flame of indignation when nothing else is capable of doing it. So happened it in the present instance. So long as the ruling party in the venerable Assembly did nothing more than turn a deaf ear to the humble petitions of their flocks, ordain, by force of arms, intruders over reclaiming congregations, and depose godly ministers for acting an honest and a conscientious part; so long as the ecclesiastical rulers committed such venial faults as these, the landed proprietors of Scotland were quiescent. Nay, they smiled assent to these proceedings, and considered that they were upholding the dignity of the crown when they lent all their influence to carry into effect the law of patronage. But when a motion was brought forward in the Assembly, in 1750, to make an application to government to get "the livings" increased, a great outcry was raised against the clergy, by those very men who had hitherto been their chief supporters, in trampling under foot the privileges of the people. Many of the Scottish counties passed strong resolutions upon the subject, condemnatory of the avarice and selfishness of the ministers. A standing committee, consisting of noblemen and gentlemen, was appointed at Edinburgh, to watch over the progress of this affair, and to oppose, by every legal method, the application of the Assembly. His Majesty's Commissioner deemed the matter of such importance, as to take notice of it in his speech, when dissolving the Assembly, and he warned them of the risk they incurred of losing all, by grasping at too much.

Those, however, who guided the movements of the church, were not deterred by this mighty stir, on the part of the landed interest, from prosecuting their object. Commissioners were despatched to London to petition his Majesty, and the two houses of Parliament, for relief; but, after dancing attendance on those in power, for several months, they were obliged to return without accomplishing their errand. The royal ear was shut against them, and no relief from Parliament could be obtained. But the journey, though unsuccessful as to the

main object of it, was not altogether lost. One useful lesson was taught by it to those who occupied the high places in the Scottish church, and that was a lesson of humility. They learned from the experiment which they had been making, that though they might do with the people what they pleased, yet they could not, with all their boasted influence, obtain from those on whose smiles they were dependent, an advance of the legal minimum of stipend, which, at this period, amounted to the vast sum of £44 : 8 : 10½ ! \*

These proceedings of the national church increased the unpopularity, which it had already acquired by its disregard of the people's spiritual welfare, in enforcing among them violent settlements. That the Secession, notwithstanding the shock which it had sustained, should not merely exist, but continue to prosper, in these circumstances, was not at all wonderful. The measures adopted by the ecclesiastical judicatories of the Establishment were such as evinced the necessity of the Secession ; and, at the same time, tended considerably to increase the number of its congregations. Having given this brief review of the state of affairs in the national church, at the period of the breach, I now proceed with the narrative of the General Associate Synod.

The following ministers and elders having met in the Reverend Adam Gib's house, Edinburgh, on the 10th April, 1747, declared that, by virtue of the protest which they had taken against the proceedings which led to the rupture, the powers of the Associate Synod were inherent in them : Of the presbytery of Dunfermline, Messrs. James Thomson, Burntisland ; Alexander Moncrieff, Abernethy ; Thomas Mair, Orwell ; George Brown, Perth ; and William Campbell, Ceres, ministers ; with Alexander Lyal, from Burntisland ; William Henderson, from Abernethy ; David Donaldson, from Ceres ; Thomas Bogie, from Leslie ; and Thomas Drysdale, from Muckhart, ruling elders : Of the presbytery of Edinburgh, Messrs. Adam Gib, Edinburgh ; Andrew Clarkson, Linlithgow ; Patrick Matthew, Midholm ; James Scot, Gateshaw ; John Whyte, Dunse ; George Murray, Annandale ; and Robert Archibald, Haddington, ministers ; with Andrew Graham, from Linlithgow ; Charles Scot, from Midholm ; Walter Henderson, from Gateshaw ; John Wilson, from Dunse ; and James Johnstone, from Annandale, ruling elders : Of the presbytery of Glasgow, Patrick Edmund, ruling elder, from Balfron. The following ministers, who were not present at this meeting, afterward declared their adherence to the Synod, as thus constituted,—Messrs. William Mair, Muckhart ; John

\* Struthers' History of Scotland, vol. ii. p. 572. Acts of Assembly, 1750.

Cleland, Balfron; Andrew Arrot, Dunnichen; David Smyton, Kilmaurs; John Erskine, Leslie; Andrew Thomson, Mearns; and Isaac Paton, Templepatrick in Ireland.\*

The chief business of the synod, at several of its meetings, referred to matters connected with the breach, of which an account has already been given. Other matters, besides these, occupied at the same time their attention. At their meeting in November, 1747, it was resolved to resume the proceedings against Mr. Nairn, which had been suspended by the disputes respecting the burgess oath. A libel was prepared and put into his hand, and he was summoned to appear before the synod, to answer to the following charges contained in it: That he was guilty of denying and impugning the present civil authority over these nations, and subjection thereunto in lawful commands: And, also, that he was guilty of a groundless and unwarrantable secession from the Associate Presbytery, now the Associate Synod, a lawfully constituted court of Christ. Mr. Nairn, in answer to the summons which had been given him, appeared before the synod, in the month of January following. After a speech in which he declined the authority of the synod, he read a long paper, vindicating his conduct on both the charges. He boldly denied, that subjection was due to the present civil government of this country, even in lawful commands; and his separation from the presbytery he attempted to justify in language peculiarly offensive. He then renewed his declinature of the synod's authority, and withdrew from the court; but, as he was removing, the moderator cited him *apud acta* to appear before them on the following day. Being called, next day, he did not appear. The synod pronounced him contumacious, and found that the charges, if proven, were relevant to infer censure. No formal proof was necessary to substantiate the charges, as the truth of them was admitted by Mr. Nairn. At a subsequent meeting he was deposed from the office of the ministry; and in February, 1750, the sentence of the greater excommunication was pronounced against him.

During the period that this process was going on a novel scene occurred in the synod. On the day that Mr. Nairn read the paper already mentioned, one John Hastie, a painter, from Edinburgh, accompanied by two witnesses, Andrew Boa and Gavin Veitch, attempted to execute a summons in the name of the Reformed Presbytery,† against Mr. James Thomson, moderator of the synod, and all the members of it, charging them to appear before said Presbytery at Braehead, in the

\* Gib's Display, vol. ii. p. 73.

† Mr. Nairn concurring with old Mr. M'Millan, had originated this Presbytery. Gib's Display, vol. ii. p. 115.

parish of Dalserf, on the 15th or 16th day of February next. Two papers were laid upon the synod's table, purporting to be libels which the synod were called upon by the presbytery to answer. These papers were dated at Linktown of Arnot, formerly Abbotshall, December 31, 1747, and were subscribed by John Cuthbertson, moderator. Inquiry being made, if any members of said presbytery were present, two persons, George Brown and John Brackenrig, rose and avowed themselves belonging to it as elders. These, with one or two more, took open part with Mr. Nairn, and joined in an obstreperous declaration of adherence to his declinature, thereby occasioning considerable disturbance in the synod. The whole of them, with Messrs. Alexander Marshall and John Cuthbertson, two ministers alleged to be present, were summoned by the moderator *apud acta*, to appear before the synod on the following day. But none of them appearing, they were all found contumacious; and the synod, after some deliberation, resolved to inflict censure upon them in conjunction with Mr. Nairn. The following was the deliverance which the synod pronounced upon the subject: "The synod, considering that Messrs. Alexander Marshall and John Cuthbertson, with George Brown and John Brackenrig, members of that pretended presbytery, are espousing and propagating Mr. Nairn's sinful and pernicious principle and practice (concerning the present civil authority over these nations, and subjection thereunto in lawful commands), inasmuch as the said persons, in an article of their pretended libel, do impeach the members of the synod, of wresting and perverting the Scripture, in the application they make of all those scriptures, which are insisted on in defence of the Associate Presbytery's principles, concerning the present civil government, and which are resumed on the first article of the libel against Mr. Nairn: And considering that these persons by their presuming to frame and give out, or acknowledge the pretended libel foresaid, have most audaciously insulted the constitution and authority of a court of Christ, and the testimony for our covenanted reformation among their hands: And considering that John Hastie, Andrew Boa, Gavin Veitch, and Alexander Young, by their foresaid behaviour, were publicly sisting themselves under the standard of the foresaid sinful and pernicious principle and practices espoused and propagated by the foresaid members of the pretended Reformed Presbytery; and did concur in the foresaid audacious insult: And considering that all the persons above mentioned have thus audaciously intruded themselves upon this synod; and laid a sufficient foundation for the synod's taking cognizance of their case and behaviour: And considering that by the behaviour of these persons respectively, the

great name, honour, and authority of our Lord Jesus Christ, in the lawful courts of his own spiritual kingdom, as also his cause and testimony, in opposition to the apostacy and provocations of the present generation in these lands, have been rudely attacked, dishonoured, and profaned:—solemnly *Depose*, on these grounds, the said Mr. Alexander Marshall, and Mr. John Cuthbertson, from the office of the holy ministry, and the said George Brown and John Brackenrig, from the office of ruling elders; and at the same time lay these four persons, together with John Hastie, Andrew Boa, Gavin Veitch, and Alexander Young, under the sentence of the lesser excommunication.”

The pronouncing of such a sentence on individuals, who did not acknowledge the authority of the synod, and who had never professed subjection to it, was considered by many as an undue stretch of church censure. Though the conduct of these persons was foolish and unbrotherly, yet the synod would have acted a much more dignified part, if they had passed it over in silence. Soon after these proceedings, Mr. Nairn left his new connexion and returned to the communion of the Established Church, into which he was not received without making the most humiliating confessions of sorrow for having left it.\*

Certain questions of casuistry were brought before the synod for judgment, in March, 1752, by a reference from the Seceders in Ireland, in which they were joined by their brethren in England. The questions concerning which the synod were required to give an opinion, were, Whether it was right for the Seceders in those countries to take the constable-oath, and the church-warden oath, to qualify them for serving in these offices; How far it was proper for them to acknowledge the Bishops' courts, or take the benefit of them for the confirmation of testaments and other causes; also, Whether they were warranted in making the usual payments for the support of the Episcopal Church, by law established in those lands. The synod were unanimously of opinion, that the people under their inspection, in England and Ireland, could not,

\* The following account of what took place in the Presbytery of Kirkcaldy, when Mr. Nairn appeared before it, for the purpose of making his acknowledgments, has been received from one who was present, and who was an ear-witness of the following amusing colloquy. Moderator: “Why did you commit the disorder of leaving the communion of the church?” Mr. Nairn: “I thought her chargeable with various corruptions.” Moderator: “But are we better now, brother?” Mr. Nairn: “I think you are.” Moderator: “No, not one bit; I rebuke you for having followed divisive courses from the Church of Scotland.” Whatever opinion may be entertained of the corruptions of the National Church, at this period, my readers will admit that it contained at least one honest Moderator.

consistently with a good conscience and without sin, take either of the foresaid oaths: because the constable-oath was too sweeping in its nature, requiring a general compliance with the laws of the land, in the execution of that office, without proper and necessary limitations; and the church-warden oath reduplicated upon certain articles, implying an approval of the observances of the Episcopal Church. They were no less decided in their opinion against their people acknowledging the Bishops' courts, or taking the benefit of them in any causes; as this, they said, implied "an homologating of an ecclesiastical constitution in those courts, with the civil places and power of kirkmen."

With regard to the payments which the Seceders were required to make, in common with the other subjects of England and Ireland, for the support of the Episcopal Church, the synod, after mature deliberation, gave an affirmative judgment. They passed an act containing an explicit declaration of their sentiments on this subject, for the satisfaction of all concerned. In this act they declare, "That though the afore-mentioned payments are applied for the support of manifold corruptions and superstitions in those Episcopal churches, which we are essaying to testify against, and which all ranks of people in these lands ought to be humbled for before the Lord, as being deep causes of his wrath against and controversy with them; Yet the synod do not find a relevant ground for scruple of conscience about submitting to civil authority in the foresaid payments; as if this could imply any homologation of the foresaid corruptions and superstitions, or of what application is made of those payments unto the support thereof, while the payers are openly engaged in a public testimony against the same, and are not suppressed in the maintenance of that testimony, but are protected in the exercise of their civil and religious liberties; and the said payments are made only in compliance with the common order of society."\*

These sentiments of the synod will scarcely stand the test of a rigid examination. Scripture and reason certainly require that subjects pay the taxes imposed on them by a legal authority, for the ordinary purposes of government; and should any portion of these taxes be applied to an object of which the payers do not approve, this may be a good reason for remonstrating with government (provided the right of petitioning be enjoyed) on the misapplication of the money intrusted to them; but it cannot furnish a valid excuse for withholding payment of the taxes altogether. For no govern-

\* Act of Synod concerning Church Payments in England and Ireland. 1752.

ment could be carried on, if each individual of the community were permitted to make his judgment or conscience the rule, according to which he either granted or withheld what was due by him to the public treasury. The case, however, assumes a different aspect, if a sum is levied annually for the avowed purpose of supporting a system of religion, which the payers consider to be corrupt and superstitious. If there be no "relevant ground for scruple of conscience," in being compelled to contribute to the support of such a system, it will be difficult to find a case in which "scruple of conscience" ought to be pled at all. True, it does not imply any homologation, on our part, of a corrupt and superstitious system of religion, when we are compelled by the strong arm of law to give it an involuntary support; but conscience is not, on that account, the less aggrieved at our being obliged to maintain a system of religion, which we believe to be opposed to the word of God, and ruinous to the souls of men. Neither does it mend the matter, to tell the persons who are thus aggrieved, that they are at liberty to testify against the corruptions and superstitions, for the maintenance of which they are obliged to pay; and that they ought to have no scruple of conscience about the payments which are thus exacted of them, because "said payments are made only in compliance with the common order of society." If this be a proper salvo to the consciences of those who are required to contribute to the support of a religion which they believe to be false, the same reasons will hold equally good with regard to the payment of money, levied avowedly for the purpose of extirpating religion altogether. Should conscientious persons object to the payment of a tax imposed for such a nefarious purpose, and should they plead that it is an infringement of the rights of conscience to require them to pay it, the answer to them would be, "There is no relevant ground for scruple of conscience in the matter: you are at liberty to testify against the wickedness of imposing such a tax, and the payment of it is made only in compliance with the common order of society." How far it may be right for persons to resist the payment of money demanded of them, in the name of the law, for the support of a religion of which they do not approve, is a question for lawyers to determine. Were justice permitted to decide, the question would speedily be settled. But that the rights of conscience are violated, and religious liberty infringed, by the imposition of a law which subjects one portion of the community to be deprived of their goods, for maintaining the religion of another portion, however corrupt and objectionable it may be, is a point which few will controvert, except those

who are blinded by self-interest, or hurried away by the zeal of partizanship.

At the meeting of synod in August, 1751, an urgent application was made to them from Mr. Alexander Craighead, minister at Middle Octarara, in Pennsylvania, and from a number of persons in that province, earnestly beseeching that the synod would appoint some ministers to labour in that part of America. The application was favourably received, and it was resolved, that measures should be immediately adopted with a view to a transatlantic mission. They appointed the Presbytery of Ireland\* to ordain Mr. James Hume, and to send him as a missionary to Pennsylvania; and Mr. John Jamieson, student, was ordered to be licensed by the Presbytery of Perth and Dunfermline, that he might be in readiness, if the synod should see fit, at their next meeting, to appoint him to be ordained, and sent upon a similar errand. The intentions of the synod, in reference to the Pennsylvanian mission, were for a short while frustrated by these two preachers receiving calls from congregations at home. Mr. Hume was called by the Associate congregation of Moyrah and Lisburn, in Ireland; and though the synod refused to sustain the call, and ordered Mr. Hume to proceed to his mission, yet he assigned a variety of reasons for refusing compliance with his appointment; so that they were ultimately obliged to relieve him from it; and he was left at the disposal of the Presbytery, that, after suitable acknowledgments had been made by him for his obstinacy, they might ordain him over the congregation by whom he had been called. Mr. Jamieson also was prevented from undertaking his mission, by a call which he received from a congregation in Glasgow. The synod listened to the excuses which were offered on his behalf, and kept him at home.

In consequence of these disappointments, and the reluctance expressed by young men to undertake missions to distant countries, the synod enacted (August, 1752), that Presbyteries, previous to their entering students on trials for licence, should require them to signify their willingness to submit to any missionary appointment that might be given them by the church courts, unless they had such objections to offer as should be found relevant; and those young men who showed an aversion to submit, were no longer to be ac-

\* This presbytery being the first Secession presbytery in Ireland, was formed in 1750-1, and, at its formation, consisted of the following ministers, with their respective elders:—Messrs. Isaac Paton, Templepatrick; David Arrott, Markethill; John Tennant, Roseyards and Bellershean; and Alexander Stewart, Newton.

knowledge in the capacity of students. Soon after the passing of this act, a renewed application was made to the synod, from a number of the inhabitants of Pennsylvania, for missionaries to be sent to that quarter. Messrs. Alexander Gellatly and Andrew Bunyan were ordered to be licensed without delay, that they might be set apart to this important work. After Mr. Bunyan had received licence from the Edinburgh Presbytery, some demur took place in his mind about his undertaking the proposed mission. Difficulties, connected with his particular situation, were stated by him, the relevancy of which was referred by the presbytery to the judgment of the synod. When the proposed objections were laid before the synod, they were declared to be irrelevant, and to afford no sufficient ground for relieving Mr. Bunyan from his engagement, and he was required to proceed with his trials for ordination. Mr. Bunyan's "want of clearness" still remained. The synod were peremptory; and after several ineffectual attempts were made to remove his difficulties, they deprived him of his licence, for refusing to fulfil his missionary appointment. This measure was a strong one. By some it will be pronounced harsh and unjustifiable. But the synod considered, that as Mr. Bunyan had received licence on the faith of his being willing to go upon a distant mission, so he had justly forfeited it by refusing to fulfil his engagement. Besides, the call from Pennsylvania for labourers to be sent into that portion of the vineyard, was loud and urgent; and if Mr. Bunyan's conduct had been permitted to pass without a strong expression of the synod's displeasure, so soon after the passing of the act above-mentioned, it would have furnished a bad precedent with regard to future licentiates, and might have had the effect of preventing the synod from engaging in any missionary enterprise whatever. The lesson was not lost upon Mr. Bunyan himself; for soon after this, he appeared before the synod; acknowledged that he had given just ground of offence by his past conduct; received a suitable admonition from the Moderator; expressed his willingness to be at the disposal of the synod, with regard to any future mission they might appoint to Pennsylvania, or to any other part of the vineyard; and having made these acknowledgments, his licence was again restored. The honour, however, of carrying the banner of the cross, in connexion with the Secession Church, across the waves of the Atlantic, was an honour in which he was not permitted to share.

Mr. Gellatly, having been licensed and ordained, was ordered to proceed by the first opportunity to Pennsylvania; and the synod appointed one of their own members, Mr. Andrew

Arnot, minister at Midholm, to accompany him and labour in that province for the space of a year, leaving it to himself either to return home, at the end of that period, or to remain, as he might feel inclined. The instructions given to these two brethren, by the synod, were, that on their arrival in Pennsylvania, they should constitute themselves into a presbytery, along with two elders, under the title of the Associate Presbytery of Pennsylvania; that they should endeavour to form, as soon as possible, two congregations with distinct elderships; that both sessions should choose representatives for the presbytery; and that none should be ordained or admitted as elders, except such as have perused and approve of the standards of the Secession Church, besides being possessed of the other qualifications required by the Holy Scriptures. These two brethren set sail for their destination in the beginning of summer, 1753; and in the year following, Mr. James Proudfoot, licentiate, was appointed to the same honourable work, that he might supply the place of Mr. Arnot, who had intimated his intention of returning home. He was ordained by the presbytery of Dunfermline, in July; and sailed from Greenock for Pennsylvania, in the beginning of August. To defray the expense connected with this mission, the synod enjoined a general collection to be made in all the congregations under their inspection. This was done for two successive years; and the result was that upwards of one hundred pounds were collected for this object; a sum highly creditable to the liberality and piety of the association, when the fewness of the congregations, at this time belonging to it, and the general poverty of the members, are taken into the account; and when it is further considered, that every year a collection was made for giving pecuniary assistance to students in the prosecution of their studies.

The philosophical class was still continued at Abernethy, in connexion with the Divinity Hall. A temporary interruption was given to it, by the events connected with the breach. But soon after that period, Mr. John Heugh was appointed to take the charge of it, and after he was ordained at Stirling, he was succeeded by Mr. William Graham. It was not rendered imperative on the young men to attend the philosophical class at Abernethy, for many were admitted to the study of divinity, direct from the classes of the university: but the object for which this class was instituted, was to afford to those who desired it, an opportunity of studying the various branches of philosophy in a school, where they would not be exposed to the danger of having their principles contaminated. When any student applied for admission into this class, with a view to the study of divinity, he was sub-

jected to a strict examination by the presbytery, in his knowledge of the Latin and Greek languages; he was also questioned closely as to his soundness in the faith, and his experimental acquaintance with religion. A committee was appointed from time to time, by the synod, to examine the philosophical class; and according to the report given by this committee, were the students declared to be qualified to enter upon the study of divinity, or not.

At this period, the attention of the synod was directed to the Arminian doctrine of universal redemption, by an overture laid before them from the Presbytery of Edinburgh. In this overture the presbytery represented it as "a matter of public notoriety, that the Arminian scheme of universal atonement and redemption, as to purchase, was lately revived and industriously promoted, in somewhat of a new and insnaring form; and that this new flood of error, whereby the system of gospel-doctrine is very widely and perniciously attacked, did more and more threaten to overthrow the faith of some." They therefore proposed to the synod, "that they might consider upon a proper course to be taken, for guarding the people under their inspection, and particularly the candidates for the holy ministry, against the imminent danger from the said revival of Arminianism; and more especially that they might turn the point of gospel truth against the chief branches of this new mode of Arminianism, by asserting particularly the opposite doctrines of the Lord's word, which are contained in our Confession of Faith, and Catechisms," &c. This overture further embodied in it seven articles, in the form of particular assertions of gospel truth; and in conclusion, it was moved, "That the synod should assert these foregoing or like articles, with a general condemnation and rejection of all contrary errors, or of all tenets and opinions which are opposite unto, or inconsistent with, the said articles of gospel truth; and with a general warning to all the people under their inspection, to beware of entertaining any contrary doctrines, particularly as they might find the same vented in any books or pamphlets which they get into their hands."

The synod entered upon the consideration of this overture in April, 1754. They agreed to wave any particular examination of what was set forth in the preamble, concerning a late revival of Arminianism in the article of universal redemption, with the imminent danger therefrom: But they also agreed in apprehending such a danger of that kind, as made it requisite and necessary for them to proceed upon the articles proposed in the overture. Having considered, *seriatim*, these articles, at several sederunts, they were, with certain amendments, approved of; and were soon after published under the

following title, *Act of the Associate Synod, containing an assertion of some gospel truths, in opposition to Arminian errors upon the head of universal redemption.*

The following is an outline of the articles exhibited in this act. In it the synod assert and declare :—

1. That in the covenant of grace our Lord Jesus Christ became the federal head and representative of those only among mankind sinners, whom God hath out of his mere good pleasure from all eternity elected unto everlasting life ; and for them only he was made an undertaking surety.

2. That our Lord Jesus Christ hath redeemed none others, by his death, but the elect only ; because for them only he was made under the law, made sin, and made a curse ; being substituted only in their room and stead, and having only their iniquities laid upon him, or imputed unto him ; so that he did bear only their sins ; for their sins only he laid down his life, and was crucified.

3. That there is but one special redemption, by the death of Christ, for all the objects thereof ; as he died in one and the same respect, for all those for whom in any respect he died.

4. That the intercession of Christ is infallibly of the same extent, in respect of its objects, with the atonement and satisfaction made in his death : So that he actually and effectually makes intercession for all those for whom he laid down his life, or for whom he purchased redemption, that it may be fully applied to them in due time.

5. That the death of Christ, as it is stated in the covenant of grace, hath a necessary, inseparable, certain, and infallible connexion with, and efficacy for the actual and complete salvation of all those for whom he died : So that redemption is certainly applied and effectually communicated to all those for whom Christ purchased the same ; all in whose stead he died being, in due season, effectually called, justified, adopted, sanctified, and glorified.

6. That Christ and the benefits of his purchase cannot be divided ; neither can these benefits be divided one from another : Wherefore we are made partakers of the redemption purchased by Christ, or of the benefits procured by his death, only through the effectual application thereof to us by his Holy Spirit, working faith in us, and thereby uniting us to Christ in our effectual calling.

7. That whereas there is a general, free, and unlimited offer of Christ, and salvation through him, by the gospel unto sinners of mankind as such (upon the foundation of the intrinsic sufficiency of the death of Christ, his relation of a kinsman-redeemer to mankind sinners as such, and the pro-

mise of eternal life through him to mankind sinners as such in the gospel), with an interposal of divine authority in the gospel call, immediately requiring all the hearers thereof to receive and rest upon Christ alone for salvation, as he is freely offered to them in the gospel; and whereas all the hearers of the gospel are thus privileged with an equal, full, and immediate warrant to make a particular application of Christ, with all his redemption and salvation, severally unto themselves, by a true and lively faith: So the gospel offer and call, containing the warrant of faith, cannot require or infer any universal atonement or redemption as to purchase; but are altogether consistent with and conformed unto the scripture doctrine of particular redemption, which is expressed in the six preceding articles.

While the several articles of this act were under deliberation, Mr. Thomas Mair of Orwell made opposition to some of them. He expressed some doubts about the second, fourth, and fifth articles; he voted against the sixth, and expressed a dissatisfaction with the general conclusion of the act. At the next meeting of synod in August, he gave in a paper of dissent, in which he found no particular fault with the act, in any of its articles: But the dissent was specially founded on its being "evident and declared, that the synod had framed their act in opposition to Mr. Fraser's (of Brae) treatise on the grounds of faith; and particularly what he delivers therein concerning the extent of the death of Christ, and his purchase of common benefits."\* The consideration of this paper was delayed by the synod till their meeting in March, 1755, when it was unanimously rejected, on the ground that it contained no reasons affecting any one article of doctrine asserted in said act.

- Mr. Mair, not satisfied with this decision, presented at the same meeting another paper, containing reasons of dissent, which the synod found to be equally vague and unsatisfactory with the one already rejected. In this paper Mr. Mair expressed a general dissatisfaction with the first five articles, complexly considered, while he stated no particular objection to the doctrine contained in any one of them, except the second. The synod dealt with him to be more explicit; to state in plain and positive terms, in what respects he differed from his brethren, with regard to the first, third, fourth, and fifth articles, and to give a categorical answer to the question, "In what sense he maintained that Christ died for all and every one of mankind sinners." They further urged him to withdraw his paper, and to refrain from uttering opinions

\* Gib's Display, vol. ii. p. 142.

inconsistent with the articles of doctrine contained in the act which the synod had sanctioned. Mr. Mair, however, would neither give an explicit statement of his sentiments, nor would he retract his paper. With the view of bringing the matter to an issue, Mr. Alexander Moncrieff presented a paper containing seven distinct positions, as expressive of the sentiments held by Mr. Mair (so far as these could be ascertained from his papers and speeches), in opposition to the synod; and he protested, "That these shall be taken and reputed as the tenets and opinions which the Rev. Mr. Mair is holding against the several articles in the foresaid act of synod, in so far as he shall not forthwith refuse the same, with a plain and positive declaration of what else it is that he really holds, in the place of each particular which he shall refuse;" And he craved, that Mr. Mair be required forthwith to answer.

The synod, after some deliberation, adopted this proposal of Mr. Moncrieff. They agreed, that Mr. Mair be required to withdraw his paper of dissent; and if he shall refuse to do so, that he be required to explain himself, in clear and positive terms, upon the several articles contained in Mr. Moncrieff's protest, with certification that the synod shall reckon those articles to be the tenets which he holds, in opposition to the synod's act, in so far as he shall not state, in plain and positive terms, what else he holds in opposition thereto. Mr. Mair craved that he might be furnished with a copy of Mr. Moncrieff's paper, and that he might be allowed time to consider the different positions which it contained. On the following day, he was asked, if he was willing to withdraw his paper of dissent, to which he replied in the negative. He was then required to state his sentiments concerning the objectionable positions ascribed to him by Mr. Moncrieff; and the positions being read, one by one, by the clerk, Mr. Mair read a paper containing a separate answer to each. But the answers which he returned were pronounced to be altogether unsatisfactory, inasmuch as he neither expressly refused nor acknowledged the obnoxious opinions ascribed to him. The synod, after having unsuccessfully urged him to be more explicit, appointed a committee to prepare an overture upon the subject.

At a subsequent sederunt, this committee reported, that Mr. Mair's paper of dissent contained, amongst other things, the following sentiments:—"That besides the special objective destination and intention of our Lord's death, respecting the elect, there was some kind of general or universal objective destination and intention thereof, in the transactions of the new covenant: That in some sense Christ was made

sin for all the hearers of the gospel, and made satisfaction for the sins of all those to whom he is exhibited by the gospel; yea, that in some sense Christ died for all mankind, or shed his blood for them, making a full payment of their debt, and a satisfaction to justice for their guilt, by some kind or manner of intention in his making satisfaction; and that this universal objective destination of the death of Christ, necessarily belongs to the ground upon which sinners may be invited to Christ, and necessarily belongs to the pleadableness of Christ's satisfaction and righteousness, at the bar of law and justice; so that the sinner's plea, to be proponed and sustained at the bar of law and justice, is a claim of right to Christ's blood, arising from the aforesaid universal objective destination; and that an excluding all such concern in or claim to the death of Christ, as for the man in particular, until he believe, leaves no access for an applying faith: And that the purchase of Christ admits of a further and larger consideration, than is treated of in our standards."

When this extract was read in the presence of Mr. Mair, he did not allege that any injustice was done to him or to his paper, in charging upon it such tenets. Whereupon, the synod strictly prohibited him "from teaching or venting any tenets or opinions contrary to the articles of truth, asserted in the act of synod dissented from; and particularly from venting or teaching the above and such other tenets or opinions, which were evidently subversive of their received standards of doctrine." They also "appointed him to evidence his falling from the teaching or venting of those tenets and opinions, by withdrawing his paper of dissent against the next meeting of synod; with certification that, if he should persist in refusing to do so, the synod would find themselves obliged to proceed to censure against him." When this sentence was intimated to Mr. Mair, he replied, that he could not be bound up from teaching what he apprehended to be the truths of God.

At the next meeting of synod, in August, 1755, a long conference was held with Mr. Mair, concerning the tenets advanced by him in his paper of dissent; and the question being proposed to him, Whether he was willing to disavow these tenets and withdraw his paper,—he dictated the following answer to the clerk:—"That he had no freedom to fall from teaching those doctrines upon the matter, which are specified and condemned in the synod's act, according to his view of them; and that therefore he could not withdraw his dissent." The synod, desirous to show him all manner of indulgence, and anxious to have the grounds of difference removed, proposed to him, "That if he was now in readiness to desire fur-

ther time for considering upon the present affair, and an opportunity of further converse with a committee of synod upon the subject, betwixt and their next meeting; and to submit, in the meantime, to the prohibition of the synod's act concerning him, as to abstaining from teaching the opinions therein referred to, and keeping them to himself, if he cannot fall from them: That then the synod should presently rest in appointing a committee for the said converse, and renewing the said prohibition." Mr. Mair replied, "That he had not freedom to acquiesce in this proposal."

The synod finding that farther lenity would be of no avail, resolved to adopt stronger measures to vindicate the truth. After some deliberation, they declared the several positions advanced by Mr. Mair, in his paper of dissent, to be dangerous errors, subversive of those principles of gospel truth laid down from the Holy Scriptures in the Confession of Faith and Catechisms: And because he refused to abstain from teaching those tenets, or to withdraw said paper, they suspended him from the exercise of his ministry, with certification that they would, at a future meeting, proceed to a higher censure, if he did not give satisfaction. Against this sentence Mr. Mair entered his protest.

No farther steps were taken till the meeting of synod in August, 1756. At that meeting, Mr. Mair was found to be as obstinate as ever. He acknowledged that he had not obeyed the sentence of suspension; and in his conference with the synod, he maintained with great pertinacity, in addition to his former statements, the two following positions:—1. "That our Lord Jesus Christ died as a surety-priest, in some sense, for reprobates,—for Judas as well as for Peter." 2. "That by his death he bought all mankind; the elect as his bride, and the rest of the world as his tools, for the glory of God and the good of the elect." Though the synod expressed their dissatisfaction with Mr. Mair's present appearance, and declared that the two positions now advanced by him afforded additional grounds of censure; yet they made another attempt to reclaim him from his error, before proceeding to the last extremity. They appointed a committee to meet and converse with him, from time to time, as they might find convenient, till next meeting of synod; and it was intimated to him, that, should his sentiments then remain unchanged, no further delay would take place in subjecting him to a higher censure. Mr. Mair expressed his willingness to meet with the committee; but stated, that as the synod had condemned the two positions now advanced by him, he protested against the condemnation thereof, for reasons to be given in due time.

When the synod met in April, 1757, long reasonings again

took place with Mr. Mair, which terminated, as usual, in his being more confirmed in his own opinions. Being asked, if he wished to have more time granted him, to re-examine his controverted tenets, with a view to retract the same, upon being convinced of the error contained in them, he answered in the negative, declaring, "That he had no dubiety about his principles." The synod then, upon the grounds above stated, deposed him from the office of the holy ministry, and laid him under the sentence of the lesser excommunication. Mr. Mair, on receiving this sentence, protested against it, and against the whole of the procedure in his case; he also protested against the act, which had been passed in April, 1754, concerning doctrine, and in which the whole of these proceedings had originated.

"The synod," says Mr. Gib, "was evidently forced to go forward, with great reluctance, in their proceedings against Mr. Mair. Much time was spent upon tedious reasonings with him, at many sederunts, in all their meetings but one, through the course of three years; with a frequent employing of brethren, all along, in turns of prayer, for divine light and pity. And though they were very desirous of his renouncing these new tenets which he had espoused, yet they never absolutely required this, as the only satisfaction in which they could acquiesce: while he all along seemed unripe for being thus dealt with, by his labouring under a great confusion of thoughts upon the subject. But what they particularly and earnestly insisted for was, that he would keep such points to himself; or that he should drop his stated opposition to their act, and should fall upon the venting of such erroneous notions among the people; of which they required no other evidence than withdrawing his paper of dissent. So that, in this way, they were willing to exercise forbearance with him. And when all such endeavours proved fruitless, they could not stop short of the issue which has been explained, without suffering the banner of gospel truth to fall among them."\*

The attention of the synod having been directed, at a former meeting, to the extensive prevalence of wickedness amongst all classes, and to the threatening aspect of divine providence, as portending dreadful judgments to the country, a committee was appointed to take this matter into consideration, and to prepare a suitable address to the people on the subject. The result of the committee's labours was laid before the synod, at their meeting in August, 1758, in the form of a pamphlet, and was entitled, *A Solemn Warning*,

\* Gib's Display, vol. ii. p. 148.

*by the Associate Synod in Scotland, addressed to persons of all ranks in Great Britain and Ireland: Wherein the great sin, danger, and duty of the present generation, in these lands, are pointed out and declared.* This "Warning," after being revised and corrected by the synod, was ordered to be immediately published. If we are to judge of the state of religion, throughout the British dominions at this period, from the statements contained in this document, it must have been at a low ebb indeed, and wickedness of every description must have been awfully prevalent. It is customary with many, to speak in a desponding tone of the present state of religion, as if it were greatly inferior to what it was in former times. According to the view which they take, every succeeding generation is growing worse and worse. This is a mistaken impression. A perusal of the *Solemn Warning*, published by the Associate Synod in 1758, will show that the Fathers of the Secession did not live in the golden age of Christianity, any more than do their children, and that great though the amount of vice and infidelity be, that is spread throughout the community at the present day, there is, in many respects, a decided improvement in the religious state of our country. The following extracts, taken from the *Warning*, show that the days in which our lot is cast, are, at least, *not worse* than those in which our fathers lived, and that much of the wailing made about the awful degeneracy of the present times is misplaced.

"The present generation," say the writers of the *Solemn Warning*, "abounds with the infidels, who reject the Holy Scriptures, the doctrine of the adorable Trinity, and the whole Christian religion. Most daring and ludicrous attacks are made, without control, upon the Christian mysteries and institutions. Almost all the current writings of this age concerning religion, are on the side of infidelity and libertinism, or of opposition to the peculiar doctrines of Christianity. The fashionable part of those who retain the Christian profession, have gone into the scheme of subjecting God's decrees about men to their own behaviour, maintaining a conditional universality of redemption, ascribing a freedom of will to fallen men for that which is spiritually good, suspending the whole efficacy of divine grace upon the pleasure of that free will, and denying the infallible perseverance of the saints. The truth of Christ's mediatory righteousness and satisfaction, the imputation thereof to sinners for their justification, yea, the whole doctrines of the Lord's word about free grace and saving faith are commonly denied or subverted, made the objects of sneer and raillery by such as pretend to a refined taste. The doctrinal articles and Confession of Faith, which

are public authority in the Established Churches of Britain and Ireland, are no longer any evidence of what religious principles are actually held by the generality of ministers or people in these churches.

“The preaching of Christ crucified, and of the several mysteries which depend upon, or are inseparably connected with, the doctrine of his cross is gone out of fashion. These matters are no more to be heard of from the pulpits of the corrupt ministry which now much prevails, than in the schools of heathen philosophers, except that some Christian terms may be used, without any inculcating of Christian truths: and instead thereof, the poor people are entertained with harangues of paganish morality. A general contempt is thus poured upon the great doctrines of the gospel, which broke forth with eminent lustre at the reformation from popery, those blessed doctrines whereby the consciences of men were led to a sweet rest, which they had sought in vain from masses, indulgences, pilgrimages, penances, and purgatory. We retain the name of protestants, while the marrow and substance of the protestant religion is generally discarded. The Christian salvation is gone out of sight, out of request, amongst the most part of this generation, with unspeakable loss and hazard to multitudes of immortal souls.”

After describing the godless conduct of persons of elevated rank, the *Warning* proceeds:—“There is a general contempt of the gospel, and neglect of the great salvation. Practical atheism abounds, with profane mockings at the mysteries of religion. Brutish ignorance of the gospel overspreads, through the prevailing of ignorant and corrupt teachers; and the people are destroyed for lack of knowledge, generally living without any concern about their souls or regard to a future state. Popish abominations are gaining ground. The anti-christian and idolatrous mass is frequented, in many places, through these lands. The Holy Scriptures are burlesqued, divine ordinances are contemned, and public worship is widely degenerated into a sort of theatrical entertainment. A heinous profanation of the Lord's name is carried on by imposing a frequent and unnecessary repetition of oaths, sometimes in the same day; by false swearing, particularly in customhouse oaths; yea, by a general mixing of blasphemous oaths and curses with ordinary conversation, especially in our fleets and armies. The holy Sabbath is commonly profaned, by neglecting both the private and public duties of that day, by frequent and unnecessary journeying, and by attending to secular business, or carnal amusements.

“Many are without natural affection, unmindful of relative duties, unruly, disobedient, enemies to the authority, peace,

and welfare of the civil government under which they live. The lands are defiled with murders, rioting, and drunkenness. There is an epidemical prodigality, vanity, and lasciviousness in apparel, with fornications, adulteries, and uncleanness of all sorts: And the profane diversions of the stage, masquerades, night assemblies, balls, and promiscuous dancings, are greatly run upon, as powerful incentives to all that wickedness. Fraud and injustice in dealings betwixt man and man doth much abound; and the wicked practice of smuggling, which is commonly attended with perjuries, and of often with profanations of the Lord's day. There is likewise a woful course of oppression, lying, dissimulation, evil speaking, backbiting, malice, envy, and covetousness, which is idolatry.

"Such is the prevailing complexion of the present age for which the Lord has a controversy with these lands. *The whole head is sick, the whole heart is faint; we are a people laden with iniquity, a seed of evil doers, children that are corrupters*: The threatened issue whereof is, to have our country desolate, and our cities burnt with fire."<sup>\*</sup>

At next meeting of synod (April 1759), Mr. Alexander Moncrieff of Abernethy proposed that the synod should take into their serious consideration the following question, viz. "If it is called for duty, to lay before the king our grievances concerning the present state of religion in these lands, together with a dutiful and suitable petition for redress of the same?" He also presented a paper, containing reasons in support of the affirmative side of the question. But the synod delayed the consideration of it till their meeting in October, when, after some discussion, they agreed, without a vote, to lay aside the farther consideration of this motion in their present circumstances. Mr. Gib took the lead in opposing this proposal, and read a paper containing answers to Mr. Moncrieff's reasons, which he afterwards published.† He argued, that it was not competent for the synod to petition the sovereign on such a subject. "We ought," said he, "to sigh and cry for public and prevailing abominations: But we may not arrogate, that what men *owe to God and their own consciences*, about the purging of these abominations, is a thing which they owe to us as a redress of our grievances. Whenever we should hear of any profane and illegal usages taking place in any cities of Britain and Ireland, or in any families that we have no inspection of, we might as well take upon us to call these things *our grievances*, and might go to claim a reformation of them from the magistrates of these cities, or the masters of these families, as a thing which is due to us, a

<sup>\*</sup> A Solemn Warning, &c.

† Display, vol. ii. p. 231.

redress of our grievances. Thus, the competency of petitioning the sovereign for a redress of our grievances, says nothing at all to the competency of such a step as is now proposed to be taken. It is a step which ought to be considered in a quite different light from that of petitioning for a redress of our grievances."

He further urged, that even though the motion were to be adopted by the synod, it would be impracticable to carry it into effect. "We cannot formally present any address or petition to the king, without getting some great personage to introduce us. But though this were done, and a favourable audience got, yet the difficulty would not be over; for all that could be expected of the king, according to the nature of the business, is, to recommend us by a message to the houses of parliament, in our going to address them; and we could have no access to them, but by a method of address which is inconsistent with our principles, taking in the title of *Lords Spiritual*. But though this could be dispensed with, yet there is no access to lay a petition before either house of parliament, without getting a member of the house to introduce it.

"When such is the case, it may be thought even ridiculous to suppose that these bars could be surmounted by us in the present state of matters. And how can we think that the Lord is calling us to any work that must depend on a ridiculous supposition as to the practicableness of it? What he calls to, he paves a way for: But he seems to have much yet to do as to the levelling of mountains in the way, before we can have such work to do as is presently under consideration."

Mr. Gib further maintained, in opposing the motion, that compliance with it would be unscriptural. "The step now proposed," said he, "seems to have no precepts or examples of the Lord's word. The Scripture enjoins us to obey the civil powers in all things lawful, to honour them, to pay them tribute, and to pray for them, that we lead a quiet and peaceable life, in all godliness and honesty. But no precept appears to be in the Scripture for any other or higher sphere of duty toward them, in the case of such as have providentially no immediate communication with them. Moreover, that nothing in the behaviour of the prophets under the Old Testament can bear out the present motion, has been already shown: and it appears to have no sort of countenance from the practice of our Lord's apostles under the New Testament.

"If there could be a time for any such application to civil powers as is now proposed, it would seem to have been in the first period of the gospel, when apostles were employed to fight against the fashionable corruptions of the world, in propagating the Christian religion. Men who had an universal

commission for that end, were privileged with supernatural assistance, and infallible conduct in the matter, and who were endued with a power of working miracles, by which their authority could easily be documented to earthly powers wherever needful. But, in all the course of their ministry, they made no such application to these powers. They never called on the assistance of the secular arm against the prevailing abominations, whatever advantages they had for doing so from the universality of their commission, and the miraculous powers with which it was accompanied. Our Lord did not see meet to make choice of that *secular way* for promoting the interests of his kingdom.

“It cannot be said that we have any more of a providential intercourse with civil powers than the apostles had, or even near so much as some of them. And Christian magistrates can have no more need of being dealt with about the true religion, than heathen magistrates had. Nor can ordinary ministers have a farther warrant to deal with the one sort, than apostles had to deal with the other. At the same time, though our Solemn Covenants are a superadded obligation to the duties previously incumbent from the Lord’s word, yet they cannot be taken as a foundation of any new duties, or as conferring upon us any rights and privileges in religious matters, beyond what apostles could claim, or presumed to use.”\*

These sentiments are much in unison with those that are held by the voluntary church writers in our own day; and they show us, that even at that early period correct views of the spiritual nature of Christ’s kingdom, and of the mischievous effects of political interference with it, had found their way into the Secession Church. Mr. Gib’s views were so much in accordance with those of the brethren assembled at that meeting of synod, that the proposal brought forward by Mr. Moncrieff could not find a supporter amongst them; they were unanimous in declaring, that the adopting of it, in present circumstances, would be inexpedient.

Mr. Moncrieff, not satisfied with the rejecting of his motion, again brought it forward at several subsequent meetings, viz. in April and August 1760, as also in April and August 1761. At these meetings, his views were seconded by Mr. Andrew Thomson, minister at Mearns; but the synod adhered to their former resolution of laying aside the motion.

When the synod met in April 1761, an overture was transmitted from the Presbytery of Glasgow, and another from the Presbytery in Ireland, in which it was proposed, that the synod should consider the propriety of presenting a dutiful

\* Display, vol. ii. p. 243.

and loyal address to his majesty (George III.) who had lately ascended the British throne. Mr. Moncrieff insisted that these overtures should be considered in connexion with the motion which he had formerly brought forward, to represent to the king the state of religion in these lands, and to petition for a redress of grievances. This the synod refused to do. They were willing that Mr. Moncrieff's proposal should be reconsidered at a future meeting if he insisted on it, but they did not think proper to blend it with the present question.

The overtures gave rise to considerable discussion. There does not appear to have been any diversity of opinion amongst the members about the lawfulness or duty of presenting a congratulatory address to his majesty. But the prevailing sentiment amongst them was, that as the law did not recognise them in their united capacity as an ecclesiastical court, an address presented by them in this character could not be constitutionally received; and that even though they should agree to present one, they could have no opportunity afforded them of approaching the throne with it. On these grounds, the proposal for presenting an address was laid aside; while they agreed, at the same time, to put upon their record a strong expression of their attachment to the reigning family, and of their loyalty to the person and government of his majesty.

The following resolution, which they adopted on this subject, will show what was the spirit by which they were animated:—"The Associate Synod having an overture transmitted to them from the Associate Presbytery of Glasgow, as also from the Associate Presbytery in Ireland, for making a dutiful and loyal address to the king on his accession to the throne, they spent some time in conferring upon this subject. And though it is manifest, by many public and unquestionable evidences, that the testimony in which they are engaged, and which they reckon themselves obliged to maintain against the corruptions and defections of this period, both in church and state, has been all along accompanied with a sincere and steadfast loyalty to the civil government, in a zealous opposition to jacobitish and all other principles of rebellion or disaffection; yet they take the present opportunity to declare, as they do hereby heartily agree in declaring, that they can yield to none of their fellow-subjects in prizing the civil government under which they live, as the best modelled government throughout the known world; in respect to the memory of our late sovereign King George II., as one of the best kings, of the mildest administration, who ruled over us as the common father of his people; in thankfulness for the peaceable accession of our present

sovereign King George III. to the throne of these kingdoms: in rejoicing at the auspicious beginning of his reign; in a firm resolution to support and live dutifully under his government, in our several stations and capacities according to the word of God, and our received and known principles founded thereon, to which we are bound by solemn covenant; in an inviolable attachment to the protestant succession, in the illustrious family of Hanover; and in a full purpose still to maintain these principles among the people under our inspection. But the synod find themselves obliged to drop the foresaid overture, because they have no view of obtaining a proper introduction to the king with such an address, and because the designation which they bear, in their united capacity, has not been taken knowledge of by their civil superiors, so as they might expect that it could be admitted in an address to the throne."

At the next meeting of synod in August, Mr. Moncrieff again brought forward his motion about petitioning the king concerning public defections and corruptions. But his motion met with no better success than formerly; the synod were almost unanimous in again rejecting it. Mr. Moncrieff dissented from this decision, and craved, in his own name, and in the name of all who might adhere to him, that *the door might be left open to him* till another meeting, to offer to the synod what might be necessary for the exoneration of himself in this matter.

Before another meeting of synod arrived, Mr. Moncrieff was removed to another world. He died on the 7th October, 1761. His character ranked high, both as a man and as a minister. He possessed great firmness, and dignity, and independence of mind. Descended from a highly respectable family, he had received in early life an excellent education; and at an early period his mind was deeply imbued with a sense of religion. Though from the respectability of his connexions, the fairest worldly prospects opened upon his view, yet, renouncing every worldly pursuit, he made the Christian ministry his deliberate and decided choice. For discharging the duties of this honourable office, he was no less qualified by his personal piety, than by his extensive theological attainments. Being appointed to the theological chair after the death of Mr. Wilson, he continued to occupy it for a period of nearly twenty years, and was honoured to train up many for the ministry, who were eminently useful in the church. In all the proceedings connected with the rise and progress of the Secession, he had taken an active part; and it must have been gratifying to him to witness before his death, the high degree of prosperity which it had attained.

At a *pro re nata* meeting of synod, held in consequence of his death, his son, Mr. William Moncrieff, minister at Alloa, was appointed, on the 10th of February, 1762, to succeed him as Professor of Divinity.

It is pleasing to contemplate the zeal which the synod displayed, at this early period of its history, in the cause of missions. So successful were its exertions in Ireland, that, at the period of Mr. Moncrieff's death, the number of its congregations in that country amounted to eighteen, under the superintendence of two presbyteries.\* Its preachers were sent occasionally to labour on the south side of the Tweed. Whitehaven, Kendal, North Shields, and Mansfield in the county of Nottingham, enjoyed the benefit of their labours. On an application made from certain individuals in the Isle of Man, preachers were also sent to labour in that island. The synod manifested a laudable anxiety to increase the number of its missionaries in America, and made considerable exertions for this purpose. In the summer of 1758, Mr. Matthew Henderson received ordination from the presbytery of Perth and Dunfermline, and was immediately sent across the Atlantic, to strengthen the hands of the brethren who were labouring in Pennsylvania; and, three years afterwards, other three missionaries were despatched to the same destination, viz. Mr. John Mason, Mr. Robert Annan, and Mr. John Smart. To defray the expense of these missions, collections were made throughout the congregations under the inspection of the synod; and the zeal displayed by the ministers was met by a corresponding liberality on the part of the people.

One of the chief difficulties which the synod had to contend with, in their missionary operations, was to overcome the reluctance which many of the preachers had to go and labour amid the woods and swamps of America. The synod, however, entertained high notions of their presbyterial authority; and, though they did not refuse to sustain reasonable excuses, yet they were in general peremptory in enforce-

\* These two presbyteries were the presbytery of Newtonlimavady, and the presbytery of Moyrah and Lisburn. The former of these consisted of the following ministers, with their congregations:—Mr. Alexander Stewart, at Newton; Mr. John Tennant, at Roseyards and Ballyroshane; Mr. Robert Reid, at Ray; Mr. Robert Law, at Donachmere.

Under the superintendence of this presbytery, were the following vacant congregations, viz. Achadowie, Ramelton, Mahochil, Alachmore, and Garvah.

Connected with the latter presbytery, were the follow ministers, with their congregations:—Mr. Isaac Paton, at Temple-Patrick; Mr. David Arrott, at Markethill; Mr. James Hume, at Moyrah and Lisburn; Mr. James Martin, at Bangor.

In connexion with this presbytery were the following vacant congregations, viz. Ballyeaston, Larne, Belfast, Drumbanagher, and Sheepbridge.

ing compliance with their missionary appointments. They made an enactment (August 1760), that any young men, whether preachers or students, who shall refuse to comply with the appointments of synod, to go and preach the gospel in North America, without having any peculiar difficulties in their case, were not to expect any farther employment or encouragement from the synod, either as probationers or students: and, as the hope of obtaining a settlement in this country operated as a temptation to induce preachers to refuse undertaking a transatlantic mission, it was further enacted, at a subsequent meeting (April 1763), that no probationer who is under an appointment to go to America, shall be allowed to be proposed as a candidate, in any moderation of a call that may take place in this country. Such enactments as these, though they may be considered by some as carrying the exercise of ecclesiastical authority to an undue pitch, yet show the zeal by which the members of the synod were animated, in sending the gospel to foreign lands.

The favourable reception which the synod gave to a memorial that was laid before them, at this period, by a committee of the Society in Scotland for Propagating Christian Knowledge, shows the deep interest which they felt in the extension of the Redeemer's kingdom, and affords a pleasing proof of the truly catholic spirit by which they were influenced, in diffusing the knowledge of the gospel both at home and abroad.

The society now mentioned, had appointed a number of gentlemen in New England, as a board of correspondence, that they might prepare and execute a proper scheme for spreading the knowledge of the gospel among the North American Indians. As ignorance of the language of these untutored tribes constituted one of the chief obstacles to the accomplishment of this benevolent work, so the plan which the New England board proposed, with a view to the surmounting of this difficulty, was the following:—That a certain number of the Indian youths, of the most promising talents and dispositions, be taken and educated under the superintendence of the board, and that they be instructed in the knowledge of the English language, and in all needful literature; and that the same number of New England youths be sent to reside, for a certain period, among the Indians, that they may learn their language, and become accustomed to their mode of living, after which they were to be recalled, and to be instructed along with the young Indians, under the same roof, and by the same masters. Their course of education being completed, they were to be sent forth two and two, a New-Englander and an Indian together, that they might

labour among the Indian tribes. But as the advantages resulting from such a plan could not be realized without considerable time spent in preparation, it was further proposed by the board that a few well-qualified missionaries be immediately sent forth, accompanied by interpreters, to communicate religious instruction to those tribes on the western border, that might seem best disposed to receive it.

Such was the scheme proposed by the New England board for the evangelizing of the American Indians; and for the execution of which, a considerable sum of money was raised by the inhabitants of the town of Boston. The society at home cordially acquiesced in the proposal, and they solicited the aid of the Associate Synod, in their benevolent undertaking. In a memorial presented to the synod, in April, 1763, the Society for Propagating Christian Knowledge expressed their hope that the synod will give all encouragement to a design of such importance to the interests of religion and of mankind, and to the peace and prosperity of Britain and her colonies, and that they will be pleased to assist them, by appointing a collection to be made in all their congregations. The synod having considered the memorial, expressed their approbation of it; and though they had at their present meeting agreed to send out another mission of their own to America, and ordered three students to hold themselves in readiness for this destination, and had, moreover, appointed a collection to be made, to defray the expenses of this new mission; yet to encourage the scheme of evangelizing the American Indians, they authorized their treasurer to pay into the funds of the Society the sum of £50, to be applied to the sole purpose of propagating the knowledge of Christianity among the Indian tribes of North America.

Another benevolent object which occupied the attention of the synod, was the formation of a fund, out of which supplies might be occasionally given to ministers' widows (in connexion with their own religious society), when left in indigent circumstances. The ministers had been accustomed to give a certain sum, out of their own incomes, for this purpose, according to the option of each individual; but this had been found inadequate to meet the necessities of widows and their families, left without any adequate provision being made for them; and it was resolved that, in addition to these voluntary contributions by the ministers, each session should pay out of their funds an annual sum, the amount of which was to be proportioned (agreeably to a fixed scale) to the number of examinable persons in each congregation. The liberality displayed, by both ministers and people, in contributing to the

support of so many laudable objects, deserves to be recorded in terms of the highest commendation.\* There are few better proofs of the predominance of Christian principle in a church, than when those who enjoy the privileges of her communion, contribute liberally of their substance for pious and charitable purposes.

\* The congregations belonging to the synod contributed to the support of the following objects: Missions to America; giving assistance to students of divinity; affording relief to ministers' widows; a fund for the general purposes of the association. At this period they also gave a salary of £90 annually to the person who taught the Philosophical Class in connexion with the Theological Seminary. The teaching of this class was usually intrusted to one of the more advanced students, who was appointed by the synod, and who delivered prelections according to a particular text-book, prescribed to him for this purpose.

## CHAPTER VIII.

State of matters in the National Church—Formation of the Relief Presbytery—Continued prosperity of the Secession—Mr. Robert Carmichael accused of heresy—Statement of his opinions—Appears before the Synod—Is deposed and excommunicated—Mr. Laurence Wotherspoon's essay—Declared heretical—Mr. Wotherspoon is rebuked and suspended—Expresses his penitence—Sentence of suspension removed—Case of Mr. Andrew Marshall, student—Mr. Alexander Pirie, teacher of the Philosophical Class—Accused of recommending heterodox books to the students—Subjected to discipline—Deprived of his licence and excommunicated—Bids defiance to the Synod—Leaves the Secession—Overture about preaching—Remarks on the overture—Watchfulness of the Synod over the students—Philosophical Class—Curriculum prescribed in it—Examinations—Report of an examining committee—Mr. Thomas Mair makes application to be restored—Application unsuccessful—Overture about probationers and ministers preaching in vacant congregations—American missions—Zeal of the Synod—Preachers averse to go—Mr. Mason settled in New York—Death of Mr. Gellatly—Pennsylvanian Presbytery—Missionary appointments—Coalition of the Burgher and Antiburgher missionaries in America—Disapproved of by the Synod—Mr. David Telfar's letter to the Synod—Unfavourably received—Mr. Gib's overture about the Secession Testimony—Reasons for adopting it—Consideration of it delayed—Mr. Gib protests—Absents himself from the meetings of Synod—Is called to account—Reads a paper in explanation of his conduct—Paper inserted in the minutes—Mr. Gib's overture rejected—Mr. Gib dissents—Overture about the support of the widows and children of deceased ministers—Regulations of the public fund—Secession preachers sent to Caithness—Preach to the Highlanders—Encouragement given to Gaelic students—Recommendation given to congregations concerning ministers' stipends—Penal statutes against Roman Catholics repealed—Alarm excited by this measure—Synod testifies against the repeal—Remarks upon it—New York Presbytery formed—Synod refuse to acknowledge it—Dealings with Mr. Gib—His overture adopted—Regulations about students of divinity.

It is fitted to excite surprise that the rapid increase of separatists from the National Church did not induce those, who presided over her councils, to adopt a more conciliatory, as well as more Christian, line of policy toward the people. If they had been capable of being taught by experience, they ought certainly to have learned lessons of caution and wisdom from the events which had taken place. They had expelled, in an arbitrary manner, from the communion of the church, some of the best of her ministers. They had alienated, by their unscriptural and oppressive proceedings, the affections of a large part of the population. The consequence of this course of procedure, which they had for a series of years pursued, was, that they now beheld two Secession Synods actively engaged in extending their influence over the country,

and every day increasing their strength, by the accessions which they were constantly making to the number of their adherents. Common prudence would have dictated to the leaders of the General Assembly, in these circumstances, to have paused in their headlong career, and calmly to have considered what was the best method to be adopted, with a view to bring back those who had deserted their communion; or, at least, to retain possession of those who had not yet gone out from them. Instead of doing this, they treated the complaints of the people with contempt. The galling yoke of patronage they rivetted more firmly than ever. They avowed it to be their determination to carry into effect all presentations, however unpopular; and the wishes of the people, however reasonable in themselves, and however loudly expressed, had, every year, less and less attention paid to them, until at last they were totally disregarded. Instances might occasionally occur of a successful opposition being made to the settlement of an unpopular candidate, but these were few in number.

By pursuing this lordly system of government, in opposition to the dictates of scripture and of common prudence, the ecclesiastical rulers not only swelled the ranks of the Secession, but they gave rise to a new class of separatists from the church, who assumed to themselves the designation of *The Presbytery of Relief*. I shall here briefly advert to the circumstances in which this presbytery originated. A detail of these circumstances, though not immediately connected with the object of this narrative, yet may with propriety be introduced, not only on account of the affinity which the Relief bears to the Secession, in its origin and progress, but also as tending to show the melancholy condition to which the people, and in some instances the ministers, were reduced by the tyrannical conduct of the General Assemblies of that period.

The deposition of Mr. Gillespie, minister at Carnock, by a sentence of the supreme court, for refusing to take any part in a violent settlement, has already been noticed. Notwithstanding the sentence which had been pronounced, he continued to exercise the duties of the ministerial office. A place of worship having been erected for him in the town of Dunfermline, he there dispensed to a numerous and respectable congregation the ordinances of the gospel. For some years he laboured without having any coadjutors in the ministry; as his former associates, however willing they might have been to render him assistance, and however gladly he might have received it, dared not show him any countenance. But after some time, he and other two ministers

constituted themselves into a presbytery in the following circumstances.

A vacancy having occurred in the town and parish of Jedburgh, by the death of their minister, Mr. James Winchester, which took place in September 1755, the elders resolved that they would oppose the settlement of any minister who should be intruded into the parish contrary to the wishes of the people; and a written agreement was subscribed by them to the following effect:—"Be it known to all those to whom these presents may come, that we, the elders in the town and country parish of Jedburgh, do unanimously agree and resolve, through the strength of divine grace, to stand and fall together in the election or voice of a minister, for this parish, against all solicitations, threats, or bribes whatsoever, or from whomsoever, and against all intrusion that may be attempted on said parish by any minister whatsoever, and that we shall cleave and adhere firmly to the majority of this parish in the choice, as aforesaid, and this we do certify," &c. A paper was at the same time circulated among the parishioners, to obtain signatures in favour of Mr. Thomas Boston,\* minister at Oxnam, to be minister of Jedburgh. But the crown, to whom the patronage belonged, without taking any notice of these proceedings, gave the presentation to Mr. John Bonar, minister at Cockpen. As Mr. Bonar had always been opposed to violent settlements, and as he had in the meantime received a call to Perth, an arrangement was made, with his consent, betwixt the General Assembly and the crown agent, whereby the presentation, which he had received to Jedburgh, was laid aside. And though the wishes of the parish had been loudly expressed in favour of Mr. Boston, yet the object of their choice was passed over; and another minister, Mr. John Douglas, minister of Kenmure, was presented to the vacant charge. This appointment was still more unpopular than the preceding one, and the opposition to it still more keen. When the call was moderated for Mr. Douglas, no more than five signatures could be obtained to it out of a considerable population. The presbytery refused to proceed with it, and the matter came before the Assembly. The supreme court referred the cause back to the presbytery; and the presbytery continuing obstinate, the business was brought before the Assembly a second time, who asserted their authority, and enjoined the presbytery to proceed with Mr. Douglas's admission without delay.

In the meantime, the people of Jedburgh having renounced all hope of obtaining the object of their choice, through the ordinary channels, proceeded to build a place of worship for

\* This person was son of Mr. Boston of Ettrick, whose writings have been held in such high estimation by the pious in this country.

Mr. Boston, that they might obtain his ministrations independent of the Assembly. When the building was finished, and all things were ready for his being inducted into his new charge, Mr. Boston appeared before the presbytery of Jedburgh, in the month of December, 1759, and laid upon their table his demission, the tenor whereof follows : \*—“ The demission of me, Mr. Thomas Boston, minister of Oxnam, humbly sheweth, albeit there are several things in the national church which have been all along disagreeable to me, yet the present mode of settling vacant churches, by the mere force of presentations, which has been so long persisted in, and is almost every year prosecuted more vigorously, is so diametrically opposite to all the laws of Jesus Christ about that matter, has such a manifest tendency to fill the church with naughty members, to mar the edification of the body of Christ, and, in fine, utterly to destroy the dying remains of religion in the nation, that I can no longer sit a member of the present judicatories of this church, but must leave my place there, that I may take my part with the oppressed heritage of God. When I entered on my ministry in the national church, more than twenty years ago, even then I beheld with concern violent settlements authorized by the General Assemblies thereof. But in these days there was a very considerable number of members who opposed such violence, and they were, by their nature and influence, a pretty good balance against those who favoured them. Hence, when the General Assembly, or their commission, had authorized a violent settlement, the next Assembly was readily composed of such members as were disposed to check and control these tyrannical measures. But, alas ! the times are visibly altered to the worse. The bulk of these worthy men who opposed the encroachments complained of, are, it is likely, retired to their rest and reward. The evidence hereof is, that, for a course of years past, we find one Assembly after another changing their members, but never changing their tyrannical measures in settling vacant churches. Those who adhere to the ancient principles and practice of the Church of Scotland in this matter, are now reduced to such a small and inconsiderable handful, that they are quite run down by their numerous opponents, and have it not in their power to reform these crying abuses, nor to do justice to the oppressed, while they continue in the communion of the church. Upon these and other considerations, which afterwards may be made manifest, I judge it my duty to give up

\* I have introduced this document at full length into the narrative, because it furnishes unexceptionable evidence, that the state of matters, instead of improving, was growing worse and worse in the Scottish Church; and shows us what urgent necessity there was for the existence of the Secession.

the place which I hold as a minister of the national church, and at the same time to continue in the full exercise of that ministry which I have received of the Lord Jesus, as God in his providence shall give me opportunity. Therefore wit ye me, the said Mr. Thomas Boston, to have demitted and laid down, like as I hereby *simpliciter* demit and lay down, my pastoral charge of the parish of Oxnam, and deliver over the said parish into the hands of the reverend Presbytery of Jedburgh, within whose bounds it lies; craving that the said reverend presbytery may, upon this my demission being lodged in the clerk's hands, and read in their presence, find the said parish vacant, and cause the same be declared in due form, and proceed to the settlement of a gospel minister therein, with all convenient speed; upon all which I take instruments, and crave extracts.

“ T. BOSTON.”

Mr. Boston having thus renounced, by his own voluntary demission, the communion of the National Church, took possession on the following Sabbath of the new place of worship which had been prepared for him in the town of Jedburgh, and immediately formed a connexion with Mr. Gillespie. It was some time, however, before they proceeded to acts of government. They did not meet together, in a presbyterial capacity, till the month of October, 1761. A violent settlement having taken place in the parish of Kilconquhar, in Fife, the people, following the example which was now so generally set, immediately built a place of worship for themselves, in the village of Colinsburgh, and gave a call to a Mr. Collier, who had laboured for some time among the English Dissenters in Northumberland. Messrs. Gillespie and Boston, with an elder from each of their congregations, met at Colinsburgh on the 22d of the above month, to admit this person to his charge. The services of the day commenced by Mr. Boston preaching the admission sermon; after which, as a presbytery, they “required of Mr. Collier a solemn declaration of his faith in God; in the scriptures as the word of God; his adherence to the constitution of the presbyterian Church of Scotland; his acquiescence with the principles of the said constitution, as exhibited in the creeds of the Church of Scotland, her Confession of Faith, form of worship, and her manner of church government, according to reformation principles; all which Mr. Collier declared he believed to be sound and orthodox, and promised to abide by the same, and in all dutiful subjection to his brethren.”

On the same day, these three ministers met again in the

afternoon ; and, after prayer by Mr. Gillespie, they “unanimously agreed to call themselves the Presbytery of Relief, for the following reasons :—“Whereas Mr. Thomas Gillespie, minister of the gospel at Carnock, was deposed by the General Assembly, 1752, merely on account that he would not settle Mr. Andrew Richardson, then minister of the gospel at Broughton, as minister of the gospel at Inverkeithing, contrary to the will of the congregation ; and thus, in contradiction to scripture, in opposition to the constitution and standing laws of the Church of Scotland, which had Mr. Gillespie done, would have been a manifest violation of the solemn oaths and engagements he came under, when admitted minister of Carnock, and therefore a presumptuous sin, and highly aggravated transgression of the law of the great God and our Saviour.

“Likewise Mr. Thomas Boston, then minister of the gospel at Oxnam, received a scriptural call from the parish and congregation at Jedburgh, to minister among them in holy things, which call he regularly accepted, according to Christ’s appointment ; and as the presbytery refused to loose the relation betwixt him and the parish of Oxnam, though required to establish a relation betwixt him and the congregation and parish of Jedburgh, he thought, though they refused to do their duty, he was bound to do his by the divine authority ; therefore, peaceably and orderly, gave into the presbytery a demission of his charge at Oxnam, and took charge of the congregation at Jedburgh.

“Also Mr. Thomas Collier, late minister of the gospel at Ravenstonedale, being admitted minister this day to the congregation of Colinsburgh, to fulfil among them that ministry he hath received of the Lord.

“These three ministers think themselves indispensably bound, by the authority of the Lord Redeemer, King and Head of the church, to fulfil every part of the ministry they have received from him ; and for that end, in concurrence with ruling elders, to constitute a presbytery, as scripture directs, for committing that ministry Christ has intrusted them with to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others, and to act for the relief of the oppressed Christian congregations, when called in providence. And herein they act the same part precisely they did when ministers, members of the Established Church of Scotland. Therefore the presbytery did, and hereby do, form themselves into a *Presbytery of Relief*, for the relief of Christians oppressed in their Christian privileges.

“The presbytery, thus constituted, chose the Rev. Mr. Boston for their Moderator ; and the presbytery appointed

Thursday, the 7th of December next, to be observed in the congregations under their inspection as a day of solemn thanksgiving unto God for his goodness in the late harvest. The presbytery also agreed that their next meeting should be when Providence calls.”\*

Such were the circumstances in which the Relief Church originated. It owed its origin to causes similar to those which gave rise to the Secession, viz. the oppressive measures that were pursued by the ecclesiastical rulers in the National Church. As the founders of it were men of acknowledged piety and worth, and as it was founded on the broad principle of giving relief to all who were “oppressed in their Christian privileges,” it speedily increased. Soon after its formation, the presbytery received an accession of strength, by the Rev. Mr. Bain of the High Church of Paisley seceding from the National Church, and joining their communion; and only a few years elapsed, when the number of its congregations was so greatly increased, that instead of one presbytery, they were subdivided into two, and thereafter constituted themselves into a synod. For a considerable period, the Relief Church had no theological seminary of their own. Their young men were trained up for the sacred office of the ministry in the theological halls of the Established Church. They were also considered by many as being too indiscriminate in their admission to communion. Both of these causes operated to their prejudice. The first, however, no longer exists, as they have now a respectable Theological Professor appointed by their own synod; and their candidates for the holy ministry are thus trained up under their own immediate superintendence. The second, also, is to a considerable extent corrected, as it is generally admitted, that they are not now so free in their admissions to communion as they were in the earlier periods of their history. They are a numerous and respectable society, widely extended over the country; and they cheerfully co-operate with other religious communities in doing good.

It does not appear that the formation of the Relief Presbytery had any influence in impeding the progress of the Secession in either of its branches. By opening a wider door of separation than that which the Secession had previously opened, many were thereby induced to leave the mother church, who might otherwise have remained in her communion; and by thus increasing the number of separatists, it tended to weaken the power of the Establishment. But, at this early period, the Secession and the Relief seldom, if ever,

\* Struthers' History of Scotland, vol. ii. p. 593, &c.

crossed one another's paths, as betwixt the ground which each occupied, there was a strong line of demarcation drawn.

As the toleration of error in the National Church was one of the chief reasons of the Secession, so it was peculiarly incumbent on the Seceders to guard against the introduction of this pestilence into their own church. Having borne testimony against the defections of others in this respect, they were under more than ordinary obligations to maintain purity of doctrine among themselves. This is a point with regard to which the ecclesiastical judicatories of the Secession have ever shown themselves exceedingly watchful; and it is satisfactory to know, that whatever evils have afflicted her during the course of her history, she has ever been enabled to hold fast the form of sound words, and has contended successfully, as well as earnestly, for the faith once delivered to the saints. The proceedings of the General Associate Synod, in reference to Mr. Thomas Mair, recorded in the preceding chapter, show the fixed determination of this portion of the Secession Church not to tolerate any views which they considered inconsistent with sound doctrine. Other cases soon occurred, in which the synod showed, by their prompt and vigorous interference, that they would not sanction, in either ministers, or preachers, or students, any deviation from that system of doctrine and government, which, as a church, they professed to hold, and which was distinctly laid down in their acknowledged standards.

At the meeting of synod in April 1762, a representation from the Presbytery of Perth and Dunfermline brought before them the case of Mr. Robert Carmichael, minister at Cupar of Angus. In the month of November of the preceding year, the presbytery had suspended this individual from the exercise of his ministry, on account of his having "relinquished the Secession testimony," and adopted "the wildest sectarian and independent principles."\* Mr. Carmichael, after sentence of suspension had been pronounced upon him, left Cupar, and went to reside in Dundee; and the presbytery referred the case to the supreme court, that they might determine what farther censure ought to be inflicted on him. The synod ordered Mr. Carmichael to be summoned to attend their next meeting, which he accordingly did. He appeared at their bar in the month of September; and being interrogated, he admitted that the representation given of his sentiments by the presbytery was correct, being defective only in the article about faith. When asked, if he was willing to renounce his opposition to the doctrines received

\* This is the phraseology employed in the presbytery's representation.

by the Secession Church, he read a paper, entitled, *The declaration and confession of Robert Carmichael, containing an adherence unto, and explication of his new principles.*

In this paper, Mr. Carmichael maintained, among other particulars, the following propositions:—"That faith is not the instrument, but a fruit and evidence, of justification; that faith is nothing else but a belief of the truth, and not of a thing that has no existence until it be believed; that there is no foundation in scripture for the universal call and offer of the gospel so much contended for; that God makes no offer of Christ, his righteousness and salvation, to any sinner, upon condition of his receiving and accepting thereof; that he (Mr. Carmichael) was not satisfied with the common descriptions of faith, and the mighty things ascribed to it, making it the means of instating sinners in the covenant of grace, the bond of union with Christ, the instrument of justification, &c.; that he saw the vanity and absurdity of all those directions and exhortations given to unbelievers in sermons and practical writings what they are to do to escape the wrath and curse of God due to us for sin, as not belonging to the gospel, but tending to lead men off from Christ and his righteousness, to work some kind of righteousness of their own to recommend them to the favour of God, or at least some sort of righteousness to give them an interest in Christ's righteousness," &c. He further maintained the following articles:—"1. That Christ's kingdom is altogether spiritual, and quite distinct from all earthly kingdoms, which cannot be maintained nor promoted by the authority of earthly kings, civil laws, and acts of parliament, giving sanction to the decrees of synods and councils. 2. That there can be no such thing as a National Church under the New Testament, and yet be a church of Christ. 3. That confessions of faith and catechisms are not the standards of doctrine, nor a test of orthodoxy, but the word of God alone. 4. That there is no warrant for national covenanting under the New Testament. 5. That the government of the church by classical presbyteries, in the subordination of judicatories, however fit for a kingdom of this world, is not instituted by Christ, and never had a being until Calvin. 6. That there is no visible church of Christ, but a society of Christ's disciples, called together by the gospel, to observe all the ordinances he hath commanded, ruled by its own overseers, and depending upon Christ alone."\*

The synod declared that this paper contained in it gross and dangerous errors; and they characterized it as "amounting to a very deep and general attack upon the whole system

\* Scots Magazine, vol. xxv. p. 523.

of our received principles, yea, the received principles of all the Protestant churches respecting the constitution of the Christian church, and the whole doctrine of salvation, through the Lord Jesus Christ. After some discussion, the following motion was adopted:—"That though the said attack on our received principles, with the very gross and dangerous errors which Mr. Carmichael has vented in opposition thereto, be evidently a most relevant ground for proceeding to high censure against him, yet, considering that the synod can have no time at present for entering into a particular discussion of this matter, and that Mr. Carmichael's behaviour at their bar has been with all appearance of ingenuity and sobriety as to the manner of it, the synod, therefore, appoint a committee to take this paper under consideration, and to draw up remarks upon it, containing a detection of the gross errors which it contains; with an overture concerning the whole, to be laid before next meeting of synod; and that Mr. Carmichael shall have access, in the meantime, for conversing with the said committee, upon his intimating a desire to the members of it, that they may hold a meeting with him for that purpose."

Mr. Carmichael did not attend next meeting of synod (April 1763), and was declared to be contumacious. The committee appointed to converse with him, and to prepare remarks upon his paper, reported, that no meeting with him had taken place, and that no formal remarks had been prepared by them; but they were of opinion, that what the synod had formerly found, with regard to the erroneous sentiments contained in Mr. Carmichael's paper, furnished a sufficient ground for proceeding against him; and they further recommended, that the committee be authorized to prepare and publish, without delay, a statement of the gross errors contained in said paper. This recommendation was adopted, and the synod entered upon the consideration of the whole question. The paper containing Mr. Carmichael's sentiments was read; and members having delivered their opinions concerning it, Mr. Carmichael was found guilty of entertaining gross and dangerous errors: And the synod solemnly deposed him from the office of the holy ministry; and pronounced upon him the sentence of the lesser excommunication, debarring him from all communion with the church of Christ in her sealing ordinances, with certification, that if he did not appear before the synod at their next meeting, and give satisfaction with regard to the gross and dangerous errors contained in his paper, they would proceed against him by the highest censure of the church. It does not appear, however, that any thing farther was done in the matter.

After pronouncing sentence of deposition upon Mr. Carmichael, the synod proceeded to consider the case of Mr. Laurence Wotherspoon, one of their students, who was charged with having published an essay containing grossly heretical sentiments. This essay made its appearance in the *Royal Magazine*, and was entitled, "Reflections on the advantages of a liberal and polite education." Amongst other things, the writer affirmed, that the man of a liberal and polite education "stands the fairest way for gaining the applause of his indulgent Author, who formed him in the womb, and infused into his tender frame the principles of wisdom and humanity, of justice and benevolence:" that thence a man "will reckon it his highest honour to divest himself of all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamour, evil-speaking, and malice; and to dress himself in the lovely garments of charity and universal benevolence:" and that by this kind of education, "our happiness will be proportional to our acquisitions."\*

When Mr. Wotherspoon was dealt with, by the presbytery of Perth and Dunfermline, to acknowledge the sinfulness of his conduct, in having published such a paper, he refused to give them any satisfaction; and they deemed the matter of such importance as to bring it before the synod. The paper, after being read and considered by the synod, was declared to contain in it "a dangerous and detestable scheme of doctrine;" and Mr. Wotherspoon, having acknowledged himself to be the writer of it, was called upon to state his views in reference to the sentiments which it contained. He declared his acquiescence in the judgment which the synod had pronounced concerning his paper, and that he detested and abhorred the doctrines which were therein advanced. His confession was considered by some of the members not to be altogether free; and it was moved, that he should be rebuked and suspended from the enjoyment of the privileges of the church, until he should give satisfactory evidence of his being truly sorry for the offence which he had committed. This motion was adopted. Mr. Wotherspoon was rebuked at the bar of the synod, and laid under the sentence of the lesser excommunication. In the meantime, he was remitted to the care of the presbytery, that they might deal with him, and endeavour to bring him to a proper sense of the sinfulness of his conduct. At the next meeting, the presbytery gave a favourable report of the spirit which Mr. Wotherspoon had displayed in their conversations with him; and Mr. Wother-

\* This specimen of philosophical jargon, which the objectionable essay contained, is extracted from a pamphlet written by Mr. Adam Gib, entitled, "An Exposure of the false and abusive libel, entitled, The procedure of the Associate Synod in Mr. Pirie's case represented," &c. p. 108.

spoon himself having appeared before the synod, and having expressed the deep sorrow which he had felt, on account of his conduct, also his entire acquiescence in the course which had been pursued, in order to reclaim him, the sentence of suspension formerly pronounced was removed; and he was again restored to the communion of the church.

Mr. Andrew Marshall, another student in divinity, was also subjected to discipline by the synod for an offence similar to that which Mr. Wotherspoon had committed. Inspired by the love of authorship, he too had sent a paper to the Royal Magazine, in which he had broached opinions that were opposed to sound doctrine. Having selected as the theme of his essay the hackneyed topic of *Ambition*, he had, under this specious name, lauded in an offensive manner the reigning corruption of human nature; and refusing to acknowledge that he had been guilty of any offence, or to express any sorrow, he was ordered to be rebuked by the Moderator at the bar of the synod, and to be debarred from the privileges of the church.

From these instances it would appear, that the philosophical mania, which at this period raged extensively within the pale of the Establishment, and rendered vapid and tasteless the discourses of her ministers, had begun to infect the minds of the Secession students; and the synod acted a wise and faithful part in checking at the very commencement that affectation of philosophical refinement, which, wherever it prevails to any extent, exercises a withering influence upon the ministrations of the pulpit.

Upon inquiry, the synod found, that the person whom they had employed to teach the Philosophical Class, in connexion with their Theological Seminary, had been recommending to the students books of a pernicious tendency, and had thereby endeavoured to infuse into their minds objectionable notions. To this individual they also applied the rod of discipline; but they did not find him to be a tractable subject. Instead of meekly submitting to their rebukes, and acknowledging his fault, he threw down the gauntlet to them, and bade them open defiance. The person, whom the synod took to task for his misconduct in this matter, was Mr. Alexander Pirie. He had been appointed to succeed Mr. John Mason, in teaching philosophy to the students; and, after having taught the class for about two years, he was ordered to be taken on trials for licence, with a view to his being sent on a mission to America. Mr. Pirie does not appear to have been much inclined to this work; for at the first meeting of synod, after his appointment, he sent a letter requesting to be excused from going to America, on the ground of

indisposition. The synod sustained his excuse in the meantime, but continued his missionary appointment upon him, and enjoined him to fulfil it so soon as he should recover from the indisposition under which he was labouring.

But after this appointment was given, the synod received such information as induced them to institute an inquiry into the truth of certain reports which were circulated, unfavourable to Mr. Pirie's orthodoxy. In obedience to an intimation given to that effect, Mr. Pirie appeared before the synod at their meeting in August 1763, and being interrogated, whether he had recommended to the students of philosophy, lately under his charge, a book entitled, *Essays on the Principles of Morality and Natural Religion*, as a proper model upon which they should form their sentiments about these matters, he acknowledged that he had done so; but denied that there was anything objectionable in the book which he had recommended. An essay on liberty and necessity, contained in this book, had been specially recommended by Mr. Pirie to the students; and in his prelections on moral philosophy, he had adopted and inculcated the principles of the essay as his own. The synod were of opinion, that the doctrine taught in this essay was opposed to scripture, and their authorized standards. In the deliverance, which they gave on the subject, they found, that the essay "evidently contains a doctrine of such necessity as necessarily excludes the consideration of man's fall and of original sin, with all blameableness and punishableness of any human actions, and contradicts the sovereignty of God's will in his eternal decrees and universal providence." Mr. Pirie maintained, in opposition to the synod, that the doctrine taught in the essay, on the subject of liberty and necessity, was the same as that which is contained in the Secession standards. He declared that he had not discovered any errors in the essay, that he was willing to renounce whatever errors might be contained in it, so soon as the synod should point them out; and that if he had thought the recommending of the treatise would have given offence, he would have refrained from doing it.

The opinion of Mr. Pirie, on the point at issue, being opposed to that of the synod, and his conduct being further aggravated by his having spoken in a contemptuous manner of the synod's procedure, in reference to Mr. Wotherspoon, he was subjected to the censure of the church. The synod, by a vote, deprived him of his licence, as a probationer, excommunicated him from the privileges of the church, and appointed him to be solemnly rebuked at their bar. After the rebuke was administered, he appealed from the procedure of the synod to the court of heaven, where, he said, he and they must soon ap-

pear, and then left the house in a passionate manner, uttering offensive expressions against those who had sat in judgment upon him.

Having soon after received a call from a portion of the Abernethy congregation, with whom he had ingratiated himself, and having got connected with the other branch of the Secession, he was not long in their communion, when he was libelled before the presbytery of which he was a member, on the charge of heresy, and suspended from the exercise of his ministry. These proceedings gave him a distaste at the Secession. He considered himself a much injured individual, because he was not permitted to teach those sentiments that were most agreeable to himself. After his suspension, he found that the distinguishing principles of the Secession Church were not "the principles of the oracles of God;" and he gave in his declinature, renouncing all subjection to her authority. His final departure from her communion he signalized by the publication of an abusive pamphlet, in which he accused the Seceding ministers of uncharitable conduct, shuffling duplicity, perjury, and almost every thing that is bad.\*

That affectation of philosophical refinement, in which had originated the cases of ecclesiastical discipline now recorded, had attracted the notice of the synod before this; and, with the view of checking it, the following overture had been introduced so far back as the month of August 1761; and, after having been duly considered, was unanimously adopted, and ordered to be engrossed in the books of all the presbyteries, that they might conform to it, in licensing young men:—"That the synod caution those under their inspection, who may be pointing towards public work in the church, against an affected pedantry of style and pronunciation, and politeness of expression, in delivering the truths of the gospel, as being an using the enticing words of man's wisdom, and inconsistent with that gravity that the weight of the matter of the gospel requires, and as proceeding from an affectation to accommodate the gospel in point

\* The fame which this person afterward acquired, as a polemical writer, has induced me to notice more minutely, than I might otherwise have done, the particulars of his early connexion with the Secession Church, and the circumstances connected with his leaving it. Should the vituperative vocabulary of any of the controversialists of the present day, who are now writing against the Secession with such keenness, be exhausted, and should they be at a loss for a few angry and abusive expressions to give zest to their productions, I can recommend to them a pamphlet, entitled, *A Review of the principles and conduct of the Seceders*, &c. published by Mr. Pirie, in 1769. They will here find a fresh supply. But, perhaps, this storehouse has already been ransacked by the most of them, as there is a wonderful similarity betwixt the beauties of speech employed by the present antagonists of the Secession, and those which Mr. Pirie penned, upwards of sixty years ago.

of style, which, if not prevented, may at length issue in attempts to accommodate it also, in point of matter, to the corrupted taste of a carnal generation; and that they recommend to all the ministers of this synod to show a suitable pattern in this matter, in endeavouring in their public ministrations, by the manifestation of the truth, in plainness and gravity, to recommend themselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God; and, at the same time, that the synod give caution against all such meanness and impropriety of language, as hath a tendency to bring discredit upon the gospel; as also against using technical, philosophical, and learned terms, that are not commonly understood."

After the cases above-mentioned had occurred, the synod recommended it to all the ministers to take special notice of the students of divinity under their charge; "particularly with regard to any thing of modish affectation into which any of them may fall;" and upon observing "any appearances of this sort," they were immediately to deal with the guilty individuals; and, should faithful admonition prove unavailing, they were to bring the matter before the presbytery or synod, as they might see proper. The synod further declared, "that they would no longer countenance those students of divinity who should be found giving themselves up to such affectations."

Some may probably be inclined to smile at the idea of an assembly of grave and learned men sitting in judgment upon such minute particulars as these, and making them the subject of synodical regulation. Those who profess to be elevated above the ordinary class of mankind, by being possessed of a more polished taste, and a more highly cultivated intellect than the rest of their species, may regard these things as indications that the first generation of Seceders were removed not many degrees, in point of refinement, above the Goths and Vandals of former times; and they may not be able to refrain from expressing their contempt at such regulations, on account of their supposed tendency to dim the light of philosophy, and repress the aspirations of youthful genius. Let not such persons be too hasty in pronouncing a sentence of condemnation. Let them remember what the professed object of the synod was, in training up young men to the office of the holy ministry. Their object was not to train up a set of dry, showy, insipid preachers, whom the people could not understand, and from whom they could derive no benefit. There was an abundant supply of this class already to be found within the pale of the National Church, to whom all the lovers of metaphysics and of belles lettres might, if they

pleased, resort ; and, for the synod to have increased the number, would have been frustrating one of the main designs of the Secession. What they aimed at accomplishing, was to train up for the ministry men who should be distinguished for their sound scriptural views of theology, for their general acquaintance with literature, and for their personal piety ; and who, by their plain, faithful, and affectionate mode of expounding the sacred volume, as well as by their pointed and solemn appeals to the conscience, might be instrumental in instructing the ignorant, arousing the careless, and in saving the souls of their fellow-men. That these important ends of the Christian ministry might be attained, they watched over their young men with a jealous care ; and they considered it a sacred duty to caution them, from time to time, against deviating from the simplicity of the gospel, and against conforming themselves, either in style or in sentiment, to the prevailing taste of a godless age.

There was no part of the administration of this synod more commendable, than the mingled affection and strictness with which they superintended the candidates for the ministry, throughout every stage of the course of study marked out to them. Those of them that were poor, but deserving, they assisted with occasional donations from their fund. They maintained, in connexion with their Divinity Hall, a class for instructing their young men in the knowledge of philosophy. The curriculum prescribed to those who attended this class, consisted at first of two sessions, but was afterwards extended (in 1767) to three. The teacher was enjoined to spend a portion of each of these sessions, in instructing the students in the knowledge of the languages ; and, in a particular manner, he was to spend a considerable part of the first upon the Greek and Latin. When any person made application to be admitted to this class, the presbytery was enjoined to be strict in examining him with regard to his religious experience, his motives in seeking to be admitted as a student, and his fitness for the sacred office. Repeated instances occurred of persons making application, who had not received a regular preparatory education at any other school, and of their being rejected on this ground. Every year, the synod appointed a committee to examine the students attending the Philosophical Class, and to report to the synod the progress which each had made. According to the report thus made, they were admitted to the study of divinity, under the Theological Professor ; or if found deficient, they were continued for some time longer in the Philosophical Class. The points on which they were usually examined, were their

knowledge of philosophy, their soundness in the faith, their acquaintance with experimental religion, and their motives for prosecuting their studies.

The following report of one of these examining committees is here extracted from the records of synod, as a specimen of the method of procedure, and of the strictness with which the duty was discharged. The examiners appointed by the synod, were Messrs. Adam Gib, William Mair, Andrew Thomson, John Muckarsie, Alexander Blyth, William Moncrieff, John Walker, James Mitchell, John Heugh, John Wilson, Andrew Bunyan, John Robertson, senior, and James Alyce. Their report was to the following effect: "That they had met according to appointment, and examined the persons hereafter mentioned, concerning their knowledge in philosophy, their soundness in the faith, their acquaintance with experimental religion, and their motives for prosecuting their studies; That David Morison, William Drysdale, John Burton, John Muirhead, John Proudfoot, John Smith, and John Young, may be admitted to the study of divinity; that Alexander Armstrong, Alexander Howieson, John Turnbull, Francis Pringle, James Ramsay, William Barlas, William Bennet, William Laing, John Cuthbert, John Mackie, John Myras, Thomas Simpson, William Mitchell, and George Cowie may be admitted, upon their joining in the bond for renewing our covenants; that John Graham and Andrew Arrot cannot be admitted, as not having given evidence of their proficiency in the study of philosophy; that William Buchanan cannot be admitted, as not having given any satisfying reason for his leaving the employment he has been bred to and betaking himself to his studies; that William M'Lellan, from North America, considering the peculiarity of his case, and his having given as much satisfaction as could be expected of one in his circumstances, may be admitted upon his satisfying Mr. Moncrieff\* of his having formally declared his adherence to the Testimony, before any of the judicatories of the Secession, under whose immediate inspection he may be."

From this report it will be seen, that before any young man could be admitted to the study of divinity, he was required to "join in the bond for renewing the covenants." This was considered by many to be objectionable; and the synod was occasionally attacked on the ground of this regulation. They were accused of throwing a snare, by means of it, in the way of youths, some of whom had scarcely passed

\* Mr. Moncrieff was Professor of Divinity, and Mr. James Bishop was teacher, at this time, of the Philosophical Class.

the period of boyhood, to swear to the truth of a religion which they had not examined. Upon the recommendation of their committee for examining the students, the synod afterward dispensed with this regulation; and, instead of requiring their young men to swear the bond of the covenants, previous to their being admitted to the study of divinity, they made this one of the conditions of their being taken on trials for licence.

Mr. Thomas Mair, of whose deposition from the office of the ministry an account has been given in a preceding part of this narrative, presented a petition to the synod, at their meeting in April 1766, craving that the sentence pronounced against him might be disannulled, and declaring his resolution to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace, and to guard against all expressions relating to the points at issue betwixt him and the synod, that might give offence. In answer to his petition, the synod appointed the presbytery of Perth and Dunfermline to hold meetings with Mr. Mair, and to converse with him on those points concerning which he had formerly refused to give satisfaction; and they were to report at next meeting the result of these interviews. Agreeably to this appointment, a meeting of the presbytery was held at Milnathort, in the month of May, which Mr. Mair attended; and, after a considerable time spent in conversation, the following proposal was made to him,—“that he should withdraw his dissent against the *Act of the Synod concerning doctrine*, on condition of his being permitted to mark something farther in the minutes, for his own exoneration.” Mr. Mair agreed to take this proposal into consideration, and requested that he might be allowed till next meeting of presbytery, to prepare a statement that might be suitable to the purpose.

When the presbytery met at Perth, on the 24th of June, Mr. Mair again attended; and, after stating that he had taken the above proposal into his serious consideration, he presented the following statement as the result of his deliberations on the subject:—“That though he was far from prescribing to the reverend synod, yet he was of opinion there are two things he is persuaded the reverend synod can do with honour to themselves, and to the truth, and particularly as these truths are so well guarded in our excellent standards, either that they would find that the truths intended to be cleared and vindicated by this act (*viz.* the act concerning doctrine), are already well-guarded by these standards, and that the endeavour used for any farther guarding of them, by this act, seems not to answer the end of the edification of the body of Christ; that they, therefore, will not further insist upon that

act (as laid), as any term of ministerial and Christian communion, or as a confession, or any part of a confession of faith, except as to the precious gospel truths therein contained, as these truths are expressed in the received standards of this church, unto an adherence whereto we are all engaged by most sacred bonds; or, if that cannot take place, that his dissent be allowed to stand according to the tenor of his address to last synod; and he, with all who adhere to his ministry, be received into full communion without farther challenge on the head of the dissent." The presbytery was urgent that Mr. Mair should withdraw his dissent altogether, but Mr. Mair was immoveable.

These proceedings were reported by the presbytery to the synod, when they met in the month of August: And the synod were unanimous in finding, that it was to no purpose to appoint the presbytery to have any farther intercourse with Mr. Mair upon the subject. In the month of September, of the following year (1767), another application was made by Mr. Mair and his congregation to be restored to the communion of the synod, which was equally unsuccessful as the preceding one.

In April, 1767, the synod recommended it to the several presbyteries under their inspection, to endeavour "that covenanting work be essayed" in congregations where ministers have been lately ordained, especially where said work has not been formerly gone about, so soon as it can be regularly overtaken; also, that presbyteries take special care, both as to young men whom they license, and probationers, whom they ordain, that they be of the same mind with the synod, not only as to covenanting in general, but as to the present seasonableness and expediency of proceeding in that duty. At the same meeting, the synod gave their sanction to the following overture:—That it be recommended to the several presbyteries, to take due care that probationers under their inspection do not violate good order, by preaching in vacancies in the bounds of other presbyteries, unless they have been appointed by their own presbytery, upon an application from that presbytery in whose bounds the vacancy lies, or by advice of some ministers of said presbytery when providentially in their bounds; also that it be recommended to ministers to be cautious and prudent, as to preaching in vacancies without the bounds or their own presbytery.

Notwithstanding the widening circle of the synod's operations, both in Great Britain and Ireland the transatlantic missions continued to occupy a considerable share of their attention; and if the zeal, which they displayed on behalf of their American brethren, had only been seconded by a proper

degree of missionary spirit on the part of the students and probationers under their charge, the number of their congregations on the western side of the Atlantic would have increased rapidly indeed. Few meetings of synod took place, for a number of years, at which they did not appoint one or more students to be licensed, with a view to the Pennsylvanian mission. But considerable difficulties were experienced by the synod, in carrying their benevolent intentions into effect, in consequence of the persons whom they appointed refusing to comply. Mention has already been made of the measures which the synod adopted with a view to secure compliance with their missionary appointments. Presbyteries were prohibited from licensing young men, unless they should express their willingness to go on any missionary enterprise to which they might be appointed. Preachers were to be deprived of their licence, and were not to expect any employment from the synod, if they should refuse to fulfil any missionary appointment which they might receive, even though it should be to a foreign land: and those, who were under such an appointment, were declared not to be eligible to any of the vacant congregations in this country. It was scarcely possible for the synod to do more, in this matter, than they did. That these regulations did not remain a dead letter in their hand, their records sufficiently attest: Frequently did they rebuke, and deprive of licence, those preachers who were contumacious; and though it appears that, in most instances, the licence was again restored, yet this was not done until a promise was previously obtained from the penitent preacher, that, for the future, he would be submissive. At that period, the difficulty of obtaining a comfortable settlement at home was not so great as it is at present; and the prospect of personal comfort, to a labourer in the American vineyard, was not then so inviting as it now is. Such considerations as these, though they do not vindicate, yet tend, in some measure, to account for that reluctance which many of the Secession preachers manifested to go and traverse, in the capacity of missionaries, the sylvan solitudes of the new world.

Before Mr. Mason and his two associates, who were sent out by the synod in the spring of 1761,\* reached the shores of America, Mr. Alexander Gellatly, minister at Middle Octarara, in Pennsylvania, died.† Mr. Mason, having been sent out in consequence of an application made for him, from a congregation in New York, and having received ordination

\* See page 274.

† This individual died on the 12th of April, 1761, after having laboured eight years in Pennsylvania. Honourable mention deserves to be made of him, as being the first Secession missionary to America.

previous to his departure from Scotland, took his seat as a member of the Pennsylvanian presbytery, immediately on his arrival. After Mr. Gellatly's death, there were only two surviving members of presbytery, besides Mr. Mason; these were Messrs. James Proudfoot and Matthew Henderson. Of the two probationers, who accompanied Mr. Mason, only one (Mr. William Annan) became a member of presbytery; and this did not take place till about four years after his arrival. At the meeting of synod, in April 1762, several communications were received from Mr. Mason and his fellow-labourers, craving that three additional missionaries might be sent out. The synod were exceedingly disposed to give a favourable ear to this application. They appointed Mr. William Jamieson, one of their preachers, to go upon this mission, by the earliest opportunity; and Mr. Alexander Stewart, minister at Newtonlimavady in Ireland, was appointed to accompany him. Mr. Stewart was to remain, till the synod should give directions about his being continued or recalled.

Scarcely had these appointments been given, when Mr. Jamieson received a call from the congregation of Kilwinning;\* and when the synod met in autumn, commissioners appeared from this congregation, craving that Mr. Jamieson, instead of being sent to America, should be appointed to labour amongst them. Both Mr. Jamieson and Mr. Stewart, being present at this meeting, were interrogated why they had not fulfilled their appointment; and the synod having heard their reasons, agreed, after a considerable discussion, to sustain their excuses, and to release them from their missionary engagements. The call from Kilwinning to Mr. Jamieson, was remitted to the Glasgow presbytery, that they might proceed in it as they should see cause.

Before the synod separated, they selected from the list of their students two other individuals, whom they ordered to be licensed, and to be sent out to strengthen the hands of the brethren, who were labouring in Pennsylvania; these were Messrs. Alexander Pirie and William Marshall. The result of the appointment in Mr. Pirie's case has already been noticed. Mr. Marshall expressed his willingness to undertake the mission; but stipulated, that, should he find the climate of North America prejudicial to his health, he should, with the concurrence of the presbytery there, be permitted to return. After Mr. Pirie expressed a reluctance to

\* It was immediately after this, that the synod enacted, that no preacher, who was under an appointment for going to America, should be capable of being proposed as a candidate for any vacant congregation in this country.

go to America, the synod appointed Mr. James Stewart, student, to accompany Mr. Marshall, and to be licensed, after his arrival, by the Pennsylvanian presbytery. What was the scene of Mr. Stewart's future labours, I am unable to say: but a short while after this, the synod received intelligence, that Mr. Marshall was ordained minister of the Associate congregation, at Deeprun and Nethameny, on the Forks of the Delaware.

In April, 1765, the synod agreed to send another mission to America; and the persons whom they selected for this honourable work, were Messrs. John France, Robert Cowan, and James Murdoch. Mr. France appeared at next meeting of synod, in the month of September, and stated reasons why he could not fulfil the appointment, and the synod, after hearing his reasons, ordered the presbytery of Perth and Dunfermline, under whose superintendence he was, to proceed no farther with his trials for licence. At the same meeting, a letter was received from Mr. Cowan, stating reasons against his being sent upon the mission. The reasons, which he assigned, were not deemed satisfactory; and the presbytery of Earlstoun, who had licensed him with a view to his being sent to America, were ordered to summon him before them and deal with him on the subject; and, unless he should give them satisfaction, as to his resolution of fulfilling the appointment of synod, they were to suspend him from the exercise of his licence, and to summon him to appear at next meeting of synod. Though Mr. France afterward obtained licence, and though Mr. Cowan was again placed upon the list of preachers, yet neither of them was employed in missionary labours.\* It was with difficulty, also, that the synod obtained the services of Mr. Murdoch for the work to which he was appointed. This difficulty was not occasioned by any aversion, which he expressed, to go and preach the gospel abroad, but by the demand that was made for his labours at home. After being licensed, he received a call from the congregation of Lisburn, in Ireland; and though the synod were at first averse to sanction such a procedure, it being in direct opposition to their own enactment on the subject, yet they afterward permitted the presbytery to ordain him, on condition of his being sent, after his ordination, on a mission to Nova Scotia. This was accordingly done. Mr. Murdoch was ordained by the presbytery of Newtonlimavady, in September 1766, and forthwith proceeded on his mission, agreeably to appointment.

\* Mr. France was afterwards ordained over the congregation at Buchlyvie, where he laboured for thirty-eight years respected and useful. Mr. Cowan, some time after this left the Secession and connected himself with the Relief

There was laid before the synod, at their autumnal meeting, in 1767, a representation from the brethren in Pennsylvania, craving that more missionaries might be sent to them; and stating that they had formed a coalescence with those ministers belonging to the Burgher Secession Synod, who were labouring in the province of New York. This coalition the synod refused to sanction. They considered that the terms, on which it was formed, were inconsistent with the "maintenance of the testimony among their hands against the course of the separating brethren:" and they appointed a committee to write to the Pennsylvanian brethren. In the mean time, they delayed farther procedure in the matter, till their next meeting.

When they met in April of the following year, there was laid before them a petition subscribed by fifty-seven individuals in Cumberland County, Pennsylvania, earnestly requesting that a minister might be sent to break amongst them the bread of life. In answer to this application, the synod appointed the Glasgow presbytery to ordain one of their licentiates, and to send him to labour amongst these people. At this meeting, also, a communication was received from the presbytery of Pennsylvania, containing farther information concerning the union with the Burgher missionaries in America. This communication was reckoned still more unsatisfactory than the one formerly sent; inasmuch as the terms of coalescence which it mentioned, were declared to be more inconsistent than the former, with the avowed sentiments of the synod, in reference to the breach.

A letter, addressed to the Moderator, by Mr. David Telfar,\* was received and read; which was to the following effect:—

"Rev. and Dear Sir,—As the presbytery of Pennsylvania lately sent a petition to your synod, which was given in to your committee of bills, by Alexander Mowbray, merchant in Edinburgh, this morning, before I came to town, it is expected that it will meet with an agreeable reception. As I was a member of that presbytery, I am the better able to inform you of their affairs; and if you are disposed for peace and agreement in the Lord, I will be exceeding fond to give you such information, by any number of members you may appoint, and prosecute the ends of agreement: And may the Lord grant us to see eye to eye, and to be perfectly united in the same mind. Please communicate this to the synod, and favour me with your answer, as soon as convenient, addressed to me, at Alexander Mowbray's, in Foster's Wynd. I am, Rev. and Dear Sir, yours respectfully,

"DAVID TELFAR."

"EDINBURGH, 6th April, 1768."

This letter met with an unfavourable reception from the synod. Mr. Telfar was informed, in a reply sent him by the

\* Mr. Telfar was minister of the congregation at Bridge-of-Teith, in connexion with the Burgher Synod. He had been sent on a mission to Pennsylvania, by that synod, and was now returned home.



moderator, that his communication had been received ; but that the synod could not hold any correspondence with him, except in the way of receiving satisfaction from him, with a view to the removal of the censure under which he was at present lying ; and that as to the terms of agreement, referred to in his letter, they could not take them into consideration. Nothing farther was done, in reference to the Pennsylvanian mission, at this meeting.

In May, 1770, they appointed Messrs. John Roger, James Ramsay, and John Proudfoot to be licensed and ordained, and to proceed across the Atlantic to strengthen the hands of the brethren, who were labouring in Pennsylvania ; they appointed, also, Messrs. James Pierson, and William Carmichael, after receiving licence and ordination, to go to Nova Scotia. At the meeting of September, in the same year, the presbytery of Perth reported, that Messrs. Proudfoot and Pierson refused to fulfil the appointment of synod. Being present, they were dealt with by the synod to comply, but continued contumacious ; wherefore, the synod ordered the presbytery to sist farther procedure in their trials.\* The presbytery of Moyrah and Lisburn, in Ireland, under whose superintendence Mr. Carmichael was, represented that it would be impracticable for him to go to Nova Scotia, but that they had appointed Mr. James Stewart to go in his stead. After hearing a statement of the case, the synod relieved Mr. Carmichael from his missionary appointment. They also recalled the appointment, which the presbytery had given to Mr. Stewart ; and they appointed Mr. John Tennant, a member of the presbytery of Newtonlimavady, to undertake a mission to Nova Scotia ; and should there be any insuperable difficulties in his way, to prevent him from undertaking this mission, it was left to the presbytery to appoint any other of their number to go to that colony.

With regard to Messrs. Roger and Ramsay, the presbytery of Glasgow reported, that both these young men had expressed their willingness to go to America, and that they had both received licence and ordination under an express engagement that they would fulfil this appointment. When interrogated by the synod, why they had not proceeded to their destination, Mr. Roger stated that no proper opportunity had yet presented itself, but that he meant to embrace the first that should occur. Mr. Ramsay stated some difficulties, that lay in his way ; but after some conversation with him, these diffi-

\* Both of these persons afterwards received licence, having engaged to fulfil their missionary appointment. But the synod did not think proper to employ them as missionaries.

culties were removed, and he declared his intention of proceeding, before next meeting of synod, to America.

As the presbytery of Pennsylvania had formed a coalescence with the Burgher brethren in that province, the synod considered whether it would be proper, in these circumstances, for Messrs. Roger and Ramsay to connect themselves with that presbytery. After some discussion, it was agreed to enjoin the presbytery to erase from their record every thing relating to their coalescence with the Burgher brethren. If this injunction should be complied with, Messrs. Roger and Ramsay were to take their seats in the presbytery; if the presbytery should prove refractory, then these two brethren, along with any others that should entertain similar views with themselves, were empowered to constitute themselves into a new presbytery. It would appear that the order of synod was complied with; for at the next meeting Mr. Roger's name was inserted in their roll, as a member of the presbytery of Pennsylvania. It was intimated, at the same meeting, that Mr. John Smith had been ordained by the presbytery of Stirling, and had proceeded to the same destination. He, too, was enrolled as a member of the Pennsylvanian presbytery.

Mr. Ramsay was taken to task for not having fulfilled his engagement. In vindication of himself, he read a long paper containing reasons for non-compliance. These the synod refused to sustain; and as he declared, in peremptory terms, that he would not undertake the mission, they did not deem it proper to insist any farther upon his complying, but they expressed their disapprobation of his conduct, and suspended him from the exercise of his ministry. Mr. Ramsay protested against this sentence, and declared that he would hold his ministry to be as valid as if no such sentence had been pronounced. But the synod were resolved to make their authority be respected. They cited Mr. Ramsay to appear before them at their next sederunt, and obliged him to withdraw his protest. Not content with this, they ordered a statement to be prepared, of the various grounds of offence which Mr. Ramsay had given, and were proceeding to adopt ulterior measures, which would in all probability have terminated in his deposition, had he not, by a timely submission, and an ample acknowledgment, averted their displeasure. Immediately after this, he received a call from a congregation in Glasgow, and was soon after inducted as their minister. This may help to account, in some measure, for the strong aversion which he manifested to go to America.

During the period that the synod were thus laudably engaged in providing for the spiritual wants of their brethren

in America, a variety of miscellaneous matters, connected with the state of the church at home, occupied their attention. In the month of May 1769, Mr. Gib introduced an overture of considerable length, in which it was proposed, first, that the synod should publish an act "bearing their homologation, and constant profession of the whole state and management of the Secession Testimony," as the same was set forth in the various public acts and deeds, emitted from time to time by the Associate Presbytery and synod; secondly, That they should either embody in the same document, or publish in a separate act, "a vindication and justification of the Secession Testimony, against the shameful and wicked attempt which was made, about fourteen years ago, for defaming and destroying the same, in a large overture, by the pretended synod of the separating brethren, concerning pretended errors in the Judicial Testimony, and other deeds which had been passed by the Associate Presbytery." The acts proposed to be consolidated by this overture, amounted to no fewer than twenty; and publishing them in one document would certainly have been a great improvement. It would have rendered them more accessible to the people, and it would have presented the grounds and proceedings of the Secession in a more concentrated and effective form before the public.

To induce the synod to adopt this overture, Mr. Gib presented a variety of reasons, which were appended to the same paper. Of these the following were the chief:—"First, According to the course of matters, even things most memorable, and which ought to continue fresh in people's view, do readily become, in process of time, somehow antiquated; and, as it is now above thirty years since the Secession Testimony was first stated, and a good many years since the last of these acts and deeds above mentioned took place, it seems to be high time that the said Testimony, in the whole bygone state and management of it, should be, upon the matter, renewed or set forth in its original freshness, by such an act as is now moved for." The second reason was, "The dismal opposition to the said Testimony, made and managed by the separating brethren, and their congregations."

His third reason was stated in the following terms:—"Some years ago, a motion arose among some, on the side of the separating brethren, for a coalescence of those called Burghers and Antiburghers, such as was to proceed upon a burial of the Secession Testimony, according to the whole state and management of it, in opposition to the course of the separating brethren; and the said motion did spread like wild fire through different parts of the country, so as to produce

numerous and disorderly meetings of people on both sides, for conversation and debate upon the subject : In reality, according to the nature of the thing, for concerting and accomplishing the burial of the Secession Testimony, which affair had a manifest tendency, and it is to be feared a good deal of success, for confounding and corrupting the minds of people under the inspection of the synod, with regard to their witnessing profession. Wherefore, it seems high time for this synod to make a proper stand against this whole stratagem and defection, by such an act as is now moved for." Another reason mentioned by him was the ignorance and forgetfulness of the Secession Testimony, and a spirit of neutrality concerning it, which prevailed among many of the present generation, under the inspection of the synod ; and he further added, " The generality of the ministers of this synod have been brought into it since the state and management of the Secession Testimony, in most of the acts and deeds above mentioned, took place. Wherefore it seems high time that these ministers should expressly serve themselves heir to their witnessing predecessors in this synod, and that an express manifestation should be made of the Associate Synod continuing still really, as well as nominally, the same, by such an act as is now moved for."

This overture the synod agreed to consider at a private sederunt ; but, after conversing on the subject, they were found to be much divided in sentiment concerning it. Some thought that the consideration of it ought to be delayed, and that an opportunity ought to be afforded to the members of the different presbyteries to weigh the matter in their own minds, before they were required to come to any decision. Others were of opinion, that they ought to proceed without delay to take some steps with regard to the overture. A vote was put, *Proceed unto some step upon this overture ; or, Delay till next meeting ?* when it carried, by a considerable majority, *Proceed*. After this vote was passed, it was moved, " That they should agree to proceed according to the whole of the overture now before them." In opposition to this, another motion was made, " That the synod should appoint a committee for drawing up an overture in vindication and defence of the Judicial Testimony, the acts concerning the doctrine of grace, and the renovation of our solemn covenants, and the answers to Mr. Nairn, with the declaration and defence thereto subjoined, in opposition to the various attacks which have been made upon the same, leaving the farther consideration of the overture till afterwards." This latter motion was carried ;\* and Mr. Gib craved that it might be marked,

\* The committee appointed to prepare this overture, consisted of the following persons :—Messrs. William Graham (Moderator), Andrew Thomson,

"That as he had voted on the first question, *Proceed*, so he had voted on the second question, *Agree*, though with the concurrence of only one elder, because he reckoned that the reverend synod ought to have given some present and proper entertainment to the whole of the overture proposed, as it only aims at an acknowledging, sustaining, and maintaining of the whole bygone state and management of the Secession Testimony; that they ought to have done so, as a necessary piece of faithfulness, in behalf of the whole of the Lord's cause among their hands." To this statement of Mr. Gib, the elder referred to, Thomas Beveridge from Paisley, declared his adherence.

This business was again pressed upon the attention of the synod, at their meeting in May of the following year. It was then moved, that the synod should consider what they were to do concerning the overture laid before them at a former meeting. Inquiry was made if the committee formerly appointed had prepared the draught of an act, according to their appointment. The answer returned was, that the committee had not yet met, nor done anything in the affair. It was agreed to postpone the farther consideration of this matter till their next meeting. Against this decision Mr. Gib entered the following protest:—"I do hereby protest, for myself, and in behalf of all the members of this synod, and of the Secession body, who shall see meet to adhere, that I am to be considered as still persisting, and as resolved (through grace), still to persist in a full adherence to the whole state and management of the Secession Testimony, which is referred to in the foresaid overture, particularly as to all the synodical wrestlings and contendings for the same, in opposition to the course of the separating brethren, and of Mr. Mair; and that I am for having the whole acts and deeds referred to in the said overture, considered as still in force, all of the same authoritative vigour as at first. Moreover, I do hereby protest, for myself, and in behalf of all the members of this synod who shall see meet to adhere, that I cannot acknowledge, nor have any concern with the business of the foresaid committee, because I conceive that, as stated in connexion with the foresaid delay, it stands in opposition to any proper acknowledgment of the said synodical wrestlings and contendings for about twenty-four years bygone, leaving the same to be considered as some way antiquated: Protesting also, that my continuing to sit in this synod ought not to be reckoned an acknowledgment of its present condition, further than as may

Alexander Troup, David Wilson, senior, William Moncrieff, John Goodlet, John Heugh, John Wilson, and James Morison.

well enough consist with what is above expressed ; or further than as it really continues to be still the same Associate Synod ; to as I may not be answerable for any thing now taking place therein to the contrary. And upon all this I take instruments, craving that the same may be recorded in the minutes of synod, and that I may be allowed extracts. ADAM GIB."

Messrs. John Robertson, James Morison, John Anderson, and Alexander Oliver, desired to have it marked, that "they craved to have the door left open till next meeting, that they might offer what they thought proper for their exoneration in this matter." When the next meeting arrived, a motion was made that the synod should consider the overture, but the consideration of it was still deferred till another meeting. Messrs. Robertson and Morison then declared that they adhered to the protest formerly taken by Mr. Gib.

The coolness which the synod displayed with regard to this overture, and certain occurrences connected with the erection of a new congregation at Leith, alienated the mind of Mr. Gib, and led him to discontinue, for a season, his attendance in the synod. At their spring meeting, in 1771, the synod finding that he had not taken his seat amongst them, and that, with the exception of the first sederunt, he had absented himself during the whole of the preceding meeting, sent some of the brethren to request him to attend, and to give reasons for his absence. Mr. Gib appeared ; and, being interrogated by the moderator, why he had withdrawn himself, he gave in the following paper, craving that it might be recorded :—" I have for some time been labouring under great difficulties about continuing to take a seat in this reverend synod, unto any farther interfering with their business ; because, from the spirit which I apprehend has been working within these five years bygone, I am now much at a loss to see any proper door remaining open for my farther usefulness in this court ; and because several things in the conduct of this synod, during that time, about which my peculiar circumstances have obliged me to keep silence, and particularly some of their proceedings at last meeting, are now become very straitening to my conscience, as to sitting silent under them ; and because several things in the conduct of some ministers of this synod during the same time, about which I have in like manner been obliged to keep silence, have also become very straitening to my conscience, as to a continued acknowledgment of membership with them in this court, without satisfaction.

" At the same time, I cannot get myself reconciled to a particular explaining, as matters presently stand, of the grievances above referred to, in order to a particular satisfaction concerning them, unless the reverend synod shall oblige me

to it, by a prosecution upon a libel, instead of yielding to what I shall now propose, or of overlooking my absence ; because I can see no probability of any good effect that such an explanation can now have ; but apprehend the only consequence must be the kindling of a new fire and contention to farther mischief, which I cannot allow myself to be a voluntary occasion of.

“ But it is a matter most grievous to me, all circumstances considered, to find myself shut out from this reverend synod ; so that I am rather willing to put up, in the mean time, with any thing that may bear but as it were a shadow of present exoneration ; and the lowest measure of this I can think of is, that I get this present representation engrossed in the minutes of synod, as a standing evidence that my continuing to sit and act in this synod, silent as hitherto about the said grievances, shall not be considered as precluding me from freedom to explain, and insist for satisfaction, about the same hereafter, if I shall live to see an opportunity for doing so, with any probability of a good effect, when the Lord shall be with us, and we with him, as in former times.”

This paper gave rise to some discussion ; but the synod agreed to allow it to be engrossed in their record. They also agreed to express their dissatisfaction with Mr. Gib in having so long retained in his breast the scruples referred to, without stating them, and in withdrawing from the synod without assigning any reasons till called for ; and they found fault with the mode in which he had expressed his difficulties in the paper now given in. After considering all the circumstances of the case, they deemed it expedient to sist all farther procedure in the matter at present, reserving to themselves the power of calling upon Mr. Gib to explain himself more particularly hereafter, if they should see cause. They resolved, at the same time, that, at an early sederunt of next meeting, they would consider the overture which had been laid before them in May 1769.

When the synod met in August, 1771, they entered upon the consideration of the overture ; and after a long discussion, the following motion was carried by a large majority :—“ That the synod lay aside the overture, because, though they heartily approve of all our received and sworn-to principles, yet they cannot see the necessity, propriety, and expediency of bringing them into question, and of passing such an act as the overture proposes, while all the acts and deeds, mentioned in said overture, are standing acts and deeds in as full force as when they were passed.” Mr. Gib, who voted with the minority on this question, craved to have his dissent marked in the following terms :—“ I hereby adhere unto, and upon

the matter renew, the protestation which I entered upon this subject at the meeting of synod in May last year, from this consideration, that a consistency of the latter part of the motion now gone into, in an ingenuous sense thereof,—that a consistency of this with the laying aside of the overture, and with the reasonings by which the matter has been brought to this issue,—is a thing absolutely beyond my comprehension.” To this dissent, three ministers (Messrs. John Robertson, sen., James Morison, and Alexander Oliver) and two elders (Messrs. George Anderson and George Ford) declared their adherence.

It is pleasing to record the Christian sympathy which the members of the synod displayed for the widows and orphans of those ministers who had been removed by death from the scene of their labours. In no part of their proceedings did they evince more of the spirit of their Master, than in the laudable exertions which they made to provide for the temporal comfort of these objects of their benevolence. Notice has already been taken of the formation of a fund,\* to which every congregation was required to contribute, and the proceeds of which were applied solely to the relief of ministers' widows, and their fatherless children. As this fund was not so productive as the exigencies of the case required, a small additional allowance was occasionally given to each widow out of the general fund of the Association. The synod were of opinion, that it is the duty of every congregation to make provision, according to their ability, for the widows and orphans of their deceased ministers, should they be left in destitute circumstances. The following overture was accordingly introduced, and received the sanction of the synod, in September, 1772 :—“ That in regard the word of God, former acts of the church, and even reason itself, require that the widows and fatherless children of ministers should be provided for, in a decent manner, with regard to the necessities of life, the synod recommend it to the several congregations under their inspection, where any of the Lord's servants have been, or shall be, called off by death, to make some provision, according to their respective abilities, for their widows and children : But the synod declare, that this recommendation shall be without any prejudice to their former act, requiring all their congregations to contribute for the provision of the widows and children of deceased ministers; and that, where any congregation makes provision for the widow or children of its deceased minister, it shall, in that case, be exempt from contributing in conjunction with other congregations, according to said act.”

\* P. 276.

The clerk was appointed to send an extract of this act to each of the presbyteries, to be laid by them before all the congregations. Notwithstanding these regulations, the fund still continued inadequate; and a few years afterward, an additional act was passed, whereby all the ministers connected with the synod in Britain were required to subscribe, in their respective presbyteries, such a sum to the widows' funds as they should be able and disposed to give; and presbyteries were to render a particular account to the synod of the sum which each congregation was required to contribute to the same object.

At the same meeting at which the above overture was adopted, the synod, with a view to render their public fund more productive, enacted the following regulations:—

First, That there be no public collections in time coming, by the authority of this synod, but one each year, in each of their congregations, for their public fund; and that this collection be made annually on the first Sabbath of April, or on the first opportunity afterward (where there is a vacancy on that day), without enjoining any other extraordinary collection.

Second, That the whole of the collection made in each congregation for that purpose, be given to the synod's fund, without any deduction by the sessions, except the ordinary amount of collection for the poor.

Third, That all the ministers of the synod be careful to have these annual collections made in their several congregations, so as to have the money brought or sent up, at one or other of the meetings of synod each year; with certification otherwise of being specially censured by the synod for their neglect.

Fourth, That a particular state of deficiencies, as to these collections, be laid before the synod at each meeting, together with a state of the money in their fund.

Fifth, That the said fund be applied not only to the ordinary purposes of training up young men for the ministry, but also for missions, and for the relief of particular congregations, so far as it can serve these purposes.

The collections made in Ireland were to be applied, in the first place, to defray the expenses of such of the brethren from that kingdom, as should attend the several meetings of synod.

At this period, the Secession congregations were but thinly scattered in the north of Scotland. One cause of this was the difficulty of procuring preachers who were acquainted with the Gaelic language. With the exception of Mr. Patrick Buchanan, who was settled at Nigg, none of the ministers

belonging to the synod appear to have been able to address the Highlanders in their native dialect. Mr. Thomas Darg, a Gaelic licentiate, was sent to labour in the north; and having received a call from a congregation at Wick, in Caithness, consisting chiefly of Highlanders, he was ordained amongst them in September, 1771. In consequence of his ordination in that remote district, the standard of the Secession was planted almost on the northernmost point of Scotland; for an application for a supply of sermon, in the Gaelic language, was soon after made by a number of people in the town of Thurso; and a similar application was made from Highlanders residing in the town and neighbourhood of Nairn. The synod authorized their Professor, Mr. Moncrieff, to look out for a few students, who might be acquainted with the native dialect of the Highlanders, and to send them to reside for a season in the North, that they might improve themselves in the Celtic language; and the necessary expenses were to be defrayed out of the public fund. It was also declared, that any students who should receive such an appointment, and who should refuse to yield compliance, were not to expect any farther encouragement from the synod.

In the summer of 1774, Messrs. Howieson and Laing, two licentiates, who had acquired such a knowledge of the Gaelic, as enabled them to preach (though imperfectly) in that language, were despatched to the North, and laboured chiefly amongst the Gaelic population, at the following stations,—Thurso, Nairn, and Strathdearn. The former of these preachers received a call from a congregation at Howford, in the neighbourhood of Nairn, and was ordained amongst them, by the presbytery of Elgin, in April, 1778. The same cause which prevented the Secession from obtaining an early entrance into the Highlands of Scotland,—viz. the want of Gaelic preachers,—has prevented it from ever obtaining an extensive footing in these mountainous regions. Notwithstanding the encouragement which has been repeatedly held out to young Highlanders to offer themselves for this work, the Secession synods have hitherto been baffled in their attempts to procure a sufficient number of well-qualified persons, to enable them to carry on missionary operations to any considerable extent, among their Celtic countrymen.

In August, 1778, the synod took into consideration a subject of much importance to the respectability and efficiency of the Christian ministry, viz., the maintenance given by the congregations to those who laboured amongst them in the gospel. At that period, the doctrine of voluntary contribution for religious purposes, was comparatively new in this country; and as the first generation of Seceders had been

trained up (at least the greater portion of them) within the pale of the Establishment, where no pecuniary effort had been required of them, it was not, of course, to be expected that, after joining the Secession, they would immediately lay aside the habit of *non-giving*, to which they had been accustomed, and all at once imbibe, in its full extent, that spirit of liberality which became them, as Christians, to cherish. Besides, a considerable proportion of those who left the Establishment, and joined the ranks of the Secession, were persons in humble circumstances of life, and, however willing they might be to contribute, they had little to give; and besides contributing to the maintenance of their ministers, there were many other objects, of a benevolent and religious nature, to which they were required to give their support. It need not therefore excite surprise, that the stipends given by many of the Secession congregations to their ministers, should be found very inadequate; and it may reasonably be supposed, that the members of the synod, in calling the attention of their people to this subject, were influenced no less by a sense of duty, than by a regard to their own personal comfort and respectability.

An overture to the following effect was introduced, and the synod was required to give it their sanction:—"As it hath pleased God, by the foolishness of preaching, to save them that believe; as a gospel ministry is a standing ordinance in the church, appointed by our God and Redeemer; and as our Lord hath ordained, that they who preach the gospel should live by the gospel,—it becomes the duty of every church, and has been the practice of every pure one, to take care that this ordinance of Christ be observed, and his laws respecting it obeyed: And whereas it is apprehended, that there are various congregations under the inspection of this synod, which are greatly defective in supporting the gospel among them, according to their numbers, abilities, and engagements in the call which they have subscribed to their ministers:

"It is therefore humbly overtured to the reverend synod, that they would take this matter into their consideration, and that an act be made by them to the following purpose, or with such alterations and amendments as shall be thought necessary:—1. That the synod appoint the several presbyteries under their inspection, to inquire into the state of every congregation in their bounds respectively,—also how the gospel is supported in each of these congregations, according to its numbers and abilities. 2. That the presbyteries be appointed also to inquire how public charges about sacramental solemnities are defrayed in the said congregations, and what

is usually done for that purpose. 3. That the presbyteries be further appointed to inquire, whether, in those congregations where no glebe is provided for the minister, any thing is done by the people toward furnishing him with a horse, in his attendance upon presbyteries, synods, and sacramental occasions. 4. That the several presbyteries be enjoined to take effectual care, that the probationers under their inspection be properly supported by the congregations, where they are appointed by them to preach. 5. That every presbytery be appointed to bring a minute of their proceeding in this matter to the first meeting of synod, after such act shall be made."

In the course of the discussion which this overture occasioned, some proposed that it should be passed into an act: others were of opinion that it would be sufficient to recommend the matters contained in it to the attention of the several presbyteries. This latter opinion preponderated; and when the question was put, *Enact*, or *Recommend*? it carried by a considerable majority, *Recommend*. A recommendation to the above effect was accordingly given to the several presbyteries, by the moderator, from the chair.

Some time before this, an act had been passed by the British Parliament, "for better regulating the government of Quebec," in which a legal establishment had been given to the Roman Catholic religion throughout the province of Lower Canada. And in the session of Parliament, this same year, another act was passed, repealing certain penal statutes affecting the papists in England; and, in consequence of the repeal, the English Catholics were permitted (on taking an oath prescribed by the act) the free exercise of their religion, and also to open schools for the instruction of their youth. These proceedings were viewed with alarm by many throughout the country. Government, by the passing of these acts, was considered as giving encouragement to popery, both at home and abroad. In this alarm the members of the synod participated, along with many of their fellow-subjects; and a committee was appointed by them, at this meeting, to prepare a testimony against the legal encouragement which had been given to popery. At next sederunt, the committee presented a draught of this testimony, which, after receiving several corrections and amendments, was approved of, and ordered to be immediately published.

In this document, the synod characterize these enactments "as inconsistent both with the principles of our holy religion, and with the safety of the state; and as having a tendency to weaken the protestant interest, by reviving and strengthening a popish faction,—the irreconcilable enemies of the protestant religion and liberties." They pronounce the making of such

laws to be "inconsistent with the duty of Christian and protestant rulers, contrary to the laws of God, greatly dishonouring to the Redeemer, and a further progress in the public and national apostacy from the Reformation." They also declare, that they "detest the principle of persecution for conscience' sake, or of denying the enjoyment of natural rights to such, whose principles or practices are not inconsistent with the peace and order of civil society. But they cannot consider those who own unlimited subjection to a foreign head, namely, the Roman Antichrist,—who believe in the infallibility of a church which has decreed it lawful to keep no faith with those whom they call heretics,—who believe in the power of the pope to absolve them from all allegiance to princes, and in the doctrine of papal dispensations, or jesuitical equivocations,—and whose known principles are destructive to the civil and religious rights of mankind: they can never consider such persons as entitled to such public favour, or that they can be viewed as good or faithful subjects of any protestant state, notwithstanding any oaths they can swear to the contrary. On the account of the idolatry, blasphemy, and persecuting cruelty, inseparable from that religion, do they give this testimony against it."

For the British government to give a civil establishment to popery in Canada, was certainly a most objectionable proceeding, and deserved all the reprobation which the synod, in common with all good protestants, pronounced upon it. But to repeal the penal statutes that pressed upon the English Catholics, and to permit this class of his Majesty's subjects to enjoy the free exercise of their religion, and to open seminaries for the instruction of their youth, so long as they conducted themselves in a legal and peaceable manner, was a step no less sanctioned by true religion and common equity, than it was consonant to the dictates of sound policy. There can be no greater evil in a country, and no greater hinderance to the prosperity of the church of Christ, than when one class of religionists attempt, by penal enactments, to prevent another class from worshipping God according to the dictates of their conscience. The synod were no doubt sincere, when they declared "that they detested the principle of persecution for conscience' sake." But, like the great majority of the protestants of that period, they did not account it "persecution for conscience' sake," to shut up the churches and schools of the Roman Catholics, and to prevent that proscribed class from worshipping God in the manner which their conscience dictated. The entertaining of these views, however, was the fault not so much of the men, as of the age in which they lived. The result has shown, that the fears which they cher-

ished with regard to the evil effects of such a measure, were unfounded; and the experience of more than half a century has proved, that neither the safety of the community, nor the interests of religion, are endangered by spreading the shield of toleration over the votaries of the church of Rome any more than by spreading it over the adherents of the protestant faith.

Intelligence reached the synod, that some of the Pennsylvanian brethren had formed themselves into a presbytery distinct from the presbytery of Pennsylvania, and had assumed to themselves the designation of the Associate Presbytery of New York. It was understood that Mr. John Mason was the person with whom this movement originated, though no distinct information had been received who the brethren were that had connected themselves with the new American presbytery. The synod declared that they could acknowledge no other presbytery in America but the one already existing in Pennsylvania; and they required the brethren there to send home a particular account of the change that had taken place, that they might judge concerning it. This presbytery had lately received an accession, by Mr. James Clarkson being added to their number.\*

Mr. Mason was a strenuous advocate for a coalition with the "separating brethren." Some communications had been received from him by persons in this country, in which he had used strong language concerning the dispute carried on betwixt the two Secession synods. He had characterized it as "the dry, the fruitless, the disgracing, the pernicious controversy about the burgess-oath;" and the following words, published by Mr. Archibald Hall, as proceeding from a member of the synod, were ascribed to him:—"This controversy has done infinite injury to the cause of God in Scotland, and wherever it has shed its malignant influences. For my own part, I cannot reflect upon it without shame and perplexity. Though we differ only about the meaning of some burgess oaths and some acts of parliament, our mutual opposition has been as fierce as probably it would have been had we differed about the most important points of Christianity. The infatuation we have fallen into will amaze posterity." At a previous meeting, Mr. Gib had founded upon this language a charge against Mr. Mason, "of his having grievously defamed the Lord's gracious and memorable interposel for the support

\* This person was ordained by the Glasgow presbytery on the 14th of July, 1772, and was sent out, immediately after his ordination, to America. Mr. Martin, a member of the presbytery of Moyrah and Lisburne, followed him, during the course of next year, to the same destination; but his name (for what reason I know not) was not added to the presbytery's roll.

of the Secession interest, in the matter of the foresaid controversy, horribly reproaching the appearance which he has enabled this synod to make, for his interest, against the separating brethren, as if it were an infatuation, and dreadfully breaking the bond of his ordination vows." He had also proposed, that the synod should erase Mr. Mason's name from their roll, and no longer acknowledge him to be one of their number, till they should have an opportunity of bringing his case to a proper trial; and that an injunction should be sent out to the presbytery of Pennsylvania, "to lay him aside from a seat amongst them," until they should receive from him proper satisfaction for his conduct.

This motion, when first brought forward in May, 1776, the synod had refused to entertain. They did not even think proper to record it in their minutes; and Mr. Gib was so much dissatisfied with their conduct in this matter, as well as with their rejection of his overture brought forward in May, 1769, that he again absented himself from the meetings of synod. For four years he kept himself aloof, and gave no countenance (at least by his presence) to their proceedings. They were again obliged to deal with him, and to call upon him to give reasons for his absence. This business was taken up by them at their meeting in August, 1780. An extra-judicial conference was held with him; and being required to state why he had not attended the synod for some years past, he mentioned a variety of grievances, of both a personal and a public nature, which, he conceived, "had shut the door" against his farther usefulness in the synod. Messrs. Moncrieff, Morison, and Bruce, were appointed a committee, to prepare an overture, agreeable to what had passed in the conference; and the result was, that the committee recommended to the synod to adopt the overture proposed by Mr. Gib, in May, 1769, and to entertain the proposal made by him in May, 1776, concerning Mr. Mason; both of which were done accordingly. The synod declared "their homologation and constant profession of the whole Secession Testimony, first among the hands of the Associate Presbytery, and afterwards among the hands of the Associate Synod." They also struck the name of Mr. Mason out of their roll, "as no longer entitled to a seat for being an active member among them, until there should be an opportunity for bringing his case to a formal trial." These things being done, Mr. Gib agreed to forget all personal grievances, and to resume his seat as formerly.

At the spring meeting of the following year (1781), the synod took into consideration the state of their Theological Seminary and complaints having been made by the

examining committees, that the attendance of the students upon the prelections of the Professor of Divinity was neither so full nor so regular as it ought to be, the following regulations, drawn up by the presbytery of Stirling, were adopted : —“ That in ordinary cases, no students of divinity shall be taken upon trials for licence, till they have attended the Divinity Class for five, or at least four, sessions after they have been admitted: That the number of sessions they attend shall be reckoned from the time they have finished their philosophical studies, at least so far as their prosecution of any of the branches thereof, at any of the Universities, shall not interfere with their attendance on the Divinity Class above three weeks : That in appointing young men to be taken on trials for licence, they will (*cæteris paribus*) appoint those first who have been most regular in their attendance upon the Divinity Class: That, in ordinary cases, such students as have not regularly attended the Class, shall not be appointed to be taken on trials, till the time of their attendance, put together, shall amount to three complete sessions, beside what account the synod shall see cause to call them to, in case their non-attendance shall be found to proceed from negligence or carelessness : And the synod recommend it to Mr. Moncrieff, to continue to keep an exact account of the time that the students under his care have attended each session, and to have respect to that as well as to the number of sessions they have attended, in recommending them to be taken on trials for licence : And the synod recommend it to the several ministers, under whose inspection the students are, to endeavour to be acquainted with them, to be assisting to them in their studies, by their advice and otherwise, and to be ready to give an account to the synod of what application they give to their studies, as well as of their character and deportment : And the synod enjoin all the students of divinity under their inspection, to be regular and exemplary in their deportment, in the places where they reside ; to be diligent in the prosecution of their studies, both during the time of their attendance upon the class and during the vacation, and to cultivate acquaintance with the ministers in whose bounds they reside.”

## CHAPTER IX.

Dr. Robertson's policy in the General Assembly—Deplorable effects of it—Scenes of strife in the church-courts—Forced induction of Mr. Thomson into the parish of St. Ninians—Singular address by a moderator—Violent settlements at Kirk of Shotts, and at Eaglesham—The Smytonite controversy—Diversity of opinion about lifting the bread at the ordinance of the Supper—Mr. Smyton insists upon uniformity—The matter brought before the Synod—Mr. Gib protests against the Synod entertaining the question—The Synod recommend forbearance—Mr. Smyton proves contumacious—Is suspended from the exercise of his ministry—Resolutions of Synod upon the subject—Meetings held about a union between the Burgher and Anti-burgher Synods—Petitions from the Irish presbyteries on the subject—Conduct of the presbyteries disapproved of by the Synod—The Irish brethren not satisfied—Send up a representation and complaint to the Synod—Desire to be regarded as a sister church—The Synod unfavourable to the proposal—Philosophical Class removed to Edinburgh—Union in America betwixt the Burgher and Anti-burgher brethren and Reformed Presbytery—Condemned by the Synod—Two of the American brethren refuse to coalesce—The Synod send an address to them—Recognise them as the presbytery of Pennsylvania—Send out a missionary to them—Petition from the Congregation of Pictou in Nova Scotia—Mr. James D. Macgregor sent to labour among them—Death of Mr. William Moncrieff—Mr. Archibald Bruce elected Professor of Divinity—Proposal to have a general Synod with four provincial Synods—Proposal adopted—Regulations of the General Synod—Regulations respecting provincial synod—Regulations concerning preachers.

THE state of affairs in the national church was, at this period, peculiarly bad. From the year 1763 till 1781, Dr. Robertson bore the chief sway in the General Assembly; and, by his dexterous management, aided by the support which he received from successive administrations, he had secured a complete triumph to the principles of the moderate party. The golden age of *Moderatism* was now arrived. The law of patronage was carried into effect with inexorable rigour, and the rights of the people were laid completely prostrate. During the eighteen years that this distinguished individual reigned, he exerted all his influence to establish the doctrine, "That a presentation, adhered to by the presentee, should in all cases be made effectual, without any reservation founded on the merits of the call, or on the number of heritors, elders, or parishioners who concurred or dissented."\* This was the doctrine in reference to the settlement of ministers, which he publicly maintained, and on which he acted; and, by means of the votes of the Assembly, with the occasional assistance

\* Moncrieff's Life of Dr. Erskine, Appendix, p. 464.

of his Majesty's troops, horse and foot, he finally succeeded in getting it established as the law and practice of the church. Yet, while such were the sentiments which he avowed, and which he endeavoured to make good at the point of the bayonet, this same person, with singular inconsistency, coincided with the rest of his brethren, moderate and anti-moderate, in giving instructions, every year, to the Commission to petition Parliament for the abolition of patronage. The celebrated clause which formed part of the Assembly's instructions to their Commission, for a period of forty-eight years,\* was to the following effect:—"And the Assembly do farther empower and direct the said Commission, to make application to the King and Parliament, for redress of the grievance of patronage, in case a favourable opportunity for so doing shall occur during the subsistence of this Commission."†

A writer,‡ to whom reference has repeatedly been made in the course of this narrative, extols the *prudence* of Dr. Robertson, in cajoling the Assembly, by agreeing to insert in the annual instructions to the Commission, a clause so much at variance with the system of government which he pursued. While this ecclesiastical ruler enforced the law of patronage upon reclaiming congregations, with a rigour hitherto unknown in the Scottish Church, he consented to petition annually the legislature for the abolition of this obnoxious law, not because he had any wish that it should be abolished, but because he knew that, in petitioning for the abolition of it, he was humouring "the popular prejudices."§ By the determined man-

\* From 1736 till 1784, when the favourite clause was expunged.

† The following account of the Commission of the General Assembly (extracted from the Appendix to the Life of Dr. Erskine), is here inserted, for the information of my readers:—"The General Assembly annually appoints a committee, which usually consists of all the members of Assembly, with full power to decide causes which the Assembly have not had time to discuss, and which they remit to this committee, which has the name of "The Commission of the General Assembly;" adding besides, instructions to watch over everything in which the general interest of the church appears to be concerned. The Commission has full power to decide finally in the causes remitted to them; and no appeal can be taken against their decisions. There is, however, a regulation which provides a remedy against any supposed injustice in the sentences of the Commission, which is equivalent, in its practical effects, to the power of appealing. There may be a complaint at the instance either of a party, or of a member of the court, brought to the next Assembly, against any sentence of a Commission, in which it can be stated, that the Commission has exceeded its powers; and, on such a complaint, the Assembly may reverse or alter the sentence complained of. The Commission has four stated meetings in the year, in May, August, November, and March. The Moderator of Assembly, on the application of a certain number of members, may call an extraordinary meeting, when any unusual circumstance requires it. The quorum of the Commission is thirty-one, of whom twenty-one must be ministers."

‡ Sir Henry Moncrieff Wellwood.

§ Such is the account which the reverend baronet gives of the prudent

ner in which he wielded the power of the Assembly, in carrying into effect the settlement of ministers, in the face of the most violent opposition on the part of the people, he did more than any other leader that had preceded him, for converting the moderation of a call into a mere mockery, and the solemnity of an ordination into a scene of tumult and bloodshed. Matters had gone on from evil to worse in the Establishment, until there was now an utter disregard of the wishes of the people in the appointment of their pastors. The language of the Assembly was, "The presentation must take effect, whether the people will or not;" and the consequences of this determination were most disgraceful and distressing.

The following is by no means an overcharged picture of what took place in many of the parishes, when the death or removal of a minister rendered it necessary that a vacant charge should be filled up. A certain time having been permitted to elapse, after the parish had been declared to be vacant, an agent appeared at the bar of the presbytery, and laid on the table a presentation from the patron, in favour of a particular candidate. The presentation being examined, and found to be duly authenticated, was sustained. The candidate's letter of acceptance was also received along with it, and recorded. A day was appointed for the moderation of a call in the vacant congregation. At the time and place appointed, the presbytery appeared, and a brother preached. After sermon, the object for which the presbytery had met was stated; a call was produced, with the name of the presentee inserted in it, and the people were required to come forward and affix to it their signatures. In answer to the invitation thus given, probably the patron, or his factor, one or two heritors, and a few friends and dependents, took the pen and subscribed their names. The rest of the people either departed in disgust, or, as was most frequently the case, produced a protest, and laid it upon the presbytery's table, declaring that the presentee was not the object of their choice, and that they would not submit to have an intruder ordained amongst them. By this movement the presbytery were placed in a situation of perplexity. They were at a loss whether to give their suffrages in favour of the patron or the people.

management of Dr. Robertson. He represents this leader of the Assembly as making it the chief object of his administration, throughout the whole of his public life, to rivet firmly the yoke of patronage, as if it were a great boon to the nation; and, that he might the more successfully accomplish his object, he is described as wheedling the minority in the church, by co-operating with them, in presenting an annual petition for that which he really did not wish should be granted. It is truly grievous to find a writer of such respectability speaking in terms of apparent commendation of conduct so disingenuous and pitiful.

Sometimes they decided in favour of the one, and sometimes in favour of the other ; but, on whichever side the decision was given, one or other of the parties protested and appealed ; and the matter, after a delay of a few months, was brought before the synod. A band of lawyers attended, armed with all the instruments of legal strife : and, after the same scenes had been transacted here, which had previously been rehearsed in the presbytery, the results were found to be equally satisfactory. If the synod threw the presentation over the table, on account of the presentee not having received a call from the people, then the patron, or his agent, appealed to a higher tribunal. If, on the other hand, the synod declared that a call from the people was not necessary, and that a legal presentation from the patron was, of itself, a sufficiently good document for authorizing the settlement of a minister, then the defeated parishioners "took instruments in the clerk's hands, and craved extracts." - Either of these alternatives brought the parties into the Supreme Court: then came "the tug of war" before the Assembly, when, after an ample display of gladiatorship betwixt the appellants and respondents, the case of the people was found to be hopeless. Principal Robertson, or some other leader, propounded the law of the church to be, that "a presentation, adhered to by the presentee, must in all cases be made effectual," independent of the wishes of the people ; that a call, though it was a becoming enough appendage (when it could be procured), was not necessary to constitute the pastoral relation, and that the Assembly had no alternative left them but to order the settlement of the patron's candidate to take place, let the consequences to the reclaiming parish, or the Church of Christ, be what they may. Such being declared to be *the law*, and a motion having been carried to this effect, an edict was issued to the presbytery to take immediate steps for getting the presentee ordained, as minister of the vacant congregation. But in those days it was much easier issuing such decrees, than getting them executed. The people, though defeated in the Assembly, still continued to resist ; and, before the work of ordination could be completed, the presence of the sheriff, and of a party of soldiers, was frequently not less necessary than the presence of the presbytery. When the indignant parishioners found that protests and arguments were of no avail, they had recourse to intimidation. Sometimes when the ministers were on their way to ordain the intruder, they were waylaid by the multitude, and carried off till the time appointed for the ordination was past. Sometimes they were assailed by showers of stones, and other missiles, and were obliged to make a precipitate retreat, as if fleeing before an enraged

enemy; and, before they could return to execute the work which the Assembly had appointed them to perform, the civil authorities were obliged to guarantee their safety, by marching along with them at the head of a troop of dragoons, or a company of foot soldiers.

Nothing could be more deplorable than the state of the Scottish parishes at this period. The policy of Dr. Robertson, and of the party that acted along with him, was to subdue all opposition to the law of patronage, by showing that no resistance, however long continued, or however fiercely conducted, could be of any avail. It were easy to multiply instances of the oppressive and disgraceful proceedings to which an inflexible adherence to this line of policy gave rise in the settlement of ministers. But the following specimen of a mock-induction, which took place within the bounds of the Stirling presbytery, presents such an extraordinary scene, that, if it had not been well-authenticated, we could scarcely have given it credit. It shows us to what miserable shifts the ministers, as well as the people, were occasionally reduced, in yielding compliance with the tyrannical mandates of the ecclesiastical courts. I shall here quote the account given of this transaction, by Struthers in his *History of Scotland*.\*

“A presentation by Sir J. Stuart of Allanbank, for Mr. David Thomson, minister of Gargunnoch, to be minister of St. Ninians, was sustained by the General Assembly in 1767, and the presbytery of Stirling ordered to proceed with his settlement, according to the rules of the church. Mr. Thomson was an old man, very infirm, and the whole parish of St. Ninians, not excepting heritors and elders, were violently opposed to him; some episcopalians and a few non-residing heritors, under the influence of the patron, being all that could be prevailed upon to concur in his call. The presbytery felt it to be a hard case, and they found means to put it off for seven long years, in the course of which various schemes were proposed for reconciling the parish, all of which, through the imbecility, the duplicity, and the obstinacy of the patron and his presentee, came to nothing; and, in the year 1773, the presbytery were enjoined by the General Assembly, on a certain day, to induct Mr. Thomson into the living of St. Ninians without fail, and every member of presbytery to attend, or to answer for his absence at the bar of the next General Assembly. The presbytery of Stirling were now in a very great dilemma. There was really no call by the parish for Mr. Thomson, and in the negotiations

\* Struthers' *History of Scotland*, vol. ii. p. 609, &c.

that had been carried on during so many years, for reconciling the parish to his ministry, he had, by his selfish conduct, very much disgusted all the brethren of the presbytery, and not one of them was willing to preach and preside on the occasion. In this situation of the presbytery, Mr. Robert Findlay of Dollar, their moderator, undertook to introduce him, at the presbytery table, which seems to have been heartily agreed to, every one being desirous of having the burden shifted from his own shoulders. Accordingly, when the presbytery arrived at St. Ninians, where an immense crowd waited to receive them, they attempted to take possession of the manse, but found it shut against them, and they were, along with the multitude, almost carried per force into the church. Mr. Findlay, probably happy to find the multitude in a condition to listen, ascended the pulpit and gave out a psalm, which was sung with all due decorum, after which he prayed, but took no notice whatever of the purpose for which they were assembled. He then, instead of preaching, as was expected, called upon Mr. Thomson by name, who stood up in his place, and to whom he made the following singular address :—

“ Sir, we are met here this day by a former appointment of presbytery, in obedience to the same sentence of the General Assembly, to admit you minister of St. Ninians, a sentence pronounced by the highest horn of ecclesiastical authority or power, that Assembly having assumed to themselves higher power than the parliament, by some profanely styled omnipotent, that wise, that august body never exacting any laws without consent of the people. There has been a formidable opposition made against you by six hundred heads of families, sixty heritors, and all the elders of the parish, I believe, except one. This opposition has continued for seven years by your own obstinacy, and if you should this day be admitted, you can have no pastoral relation to the souls of this parish, you will never be regarded as the shepherd to go before the sheep, they know you not, and they will never follow you; and let me assure you, dear Sir, if you still persist in your obstinacy, you will do more harm in this parish than you could have done good in Gargunnoch, though you had been to live there for an hundred years; and you will draw misery and contempt upon yourself,—you will be despised,—you will be hated,—you will be insulted and maltreated. One of the most eloquent and learned ministers of this church told me lately that he would go twenty miles to see you deposed, and I do assure you, Sir, that I and twenty thousand more friends to our church would do the same. I must observe to you, that in the course of this opposition, your conduct and

behaviour has been altogether unworthy and unbecoming a minister of the gospel. In that memorable letter of yours to the presbytery of Stirling, intimating your acceptance of the call, notwithstanding the numerous body of the people opposing, I wish it was in my power to forget it, you have those impious and blasphemous expressions, "That you accepted of it in the fear of God;" and at a meeting of the presbytery when you was exhorted and earnestly entreated to give up the presentation, you said that you had engaged your honour to that honourable and worthy gentleman the patron, and that you would not give it up for ten thousand pounds. What can one of your sensibility of temper and feeling propose in this mad attempt in thus rushing to foreseen misery? You was always esteemed an orthodox and evangelical preacher, and no man can lay anything to your charge as to that. You maintained a good character and reputation till your unhappy and obstinate adherence to this presentation. Now bending under the weight of years and infirmities of old age, what happiness can you propose to yourself, in this mad, this desperate attempt of yours, without the concurrence of the people, and without the least prospect of usefulness in this parish? Your admission into it, therefore, can only be regarded as a sinecure, and you yourself as stipend-lifter of St. Ninians; for you can have no farther relation to this parish— \* \* \*

Now, Sir, I conjure you by the mercies of God, give up this presentation; I conjure you for the sake of the great number of souls of St. Ninians, who are like sheep going astray without a shepherd to lead them, and who will never hear you, will never submit to you, give it up; and I conjure you by that peace of mind which you would wish in a dying hour, and that awful and impartial account which in a little you must give to God of your own soul, and of the souls of this parish, at the tribunal of our Lord Jesus Christ, give it up.

"This, all the circumstances of the case considered, is unquestionably one of the most extraordinary speeches that has ever been uttered, though it certainly had truth for its basis, and against some of its appeals one would suppose that no conscience illuminated by a single ray of the Bible would have been proof; and Mr. Findlay most probably was secretly presuming, that, having performed the painful duty of reproof and admonition so very freely, he would be saved the still more painful one, of admitting the object thereof under the name of pastor to be 'stipend-lifter' of St. Ninians. If so, with what astonishment must he have listened to the

laconic reply of the orthodox and evangelical Mr. Thomson, 'I forgive you, Sir, for what you have now said; may God forgive you; proceed to obey the orders of your superiors.' Mr. Findlay, feeling, no doubt, that to put the questions in the formula to such a candidate would be only adding to the farce, and though he was requested to do so by some of the members, proceeded to say, 'I, as moderator of the presbytery of Stirling, admit you, Mr. David Thomson, to be minister of the parish of St. Ninians, in the true sense and spirit of the late sentence of the General Assembly, and you are hereby admitted accordingly.' He then prayed, but in doing so neither noticed patron, presentee, nor presbytery, and, after singing a few lines of a psalm, dismissed the congregation."

Such is a specimen of the treatment to which the people of Scotland were subjected, in consequence of the cruel policy pursued by the General Assembly, at this period, in rigorously carrying into effect the law of patronage, regardless of the wishes and remonstrances of those whose spiritual interests ought to have been consulted. A short time previous to the above transaction, scenes not less disgraceful had taken place, at the settlement of unpopular ministers at Kirk of Shotts and Eaglesham. On the day appointed for ordination at the former of these places, no sooner did the presentee (Mr. Wells) make his appearance, than the people flew upon him, before the rest of the ministers assembled, and carrying him off, compelled him to sign a paper, promising that he would never trouble them again. When the presbytery met, they could get no access to either the church or the churchyard; and finding it impossible to constitute, on account of the tumult that prevailed, they were obliged to separate without getting their object accomplished. A statement of the matter being laid before the Assembly, who were sitting at the time, they renewed their appointment on the presbytery to proceed with the ordination, on the following Thursday; and application being made to the Lord Advocate, he "was pleased to undertake that they should have the aid of the civil power to protect them in the execution of this appointment." When the day arrived, the sheriff and a justice of the peace attended, with a troop of dragoons and a company of infantry, to protect the presbytery while engaged in the solemn work of ordination. But the ministers were never permitted to reach the spot; they were waylaid by the parishioners and carried off; and the sheriff and his military attendants, after having cooled themselves and exhausted their patience by waiting on the moor, marched home without ever having got a sight either of the people or of the presbytery. The ordina-

tion took place, some months afterward, in the session-house of Hamilton.

In the case of Eaglesham, after the usual preliminary conflicts had taken place betwixt the parties, in due form, before the church courts, the presbytery, attended by a numerous retinue of country gentlemen, and of clergymen from other presbyteries, went forth in solemn procession from Glasgow, with Principal Leechman at their head, to ordain the obnoxious presentee, Mr. Clerk. When they drew near to the scene of action, they found the people waiting at the entry to the village, prepared with offensive weapons to give them a hostile reception; and when the company, leaving their carriages, attempted to force their way into the church, a furious charge was made upon them by the indignant multitude, with clubs and stones, so that ministers and laymen were obliged to make a precipitate retreat to their vehicles, and to drive off with all possible speed; nor were they safe from the fury of their pursuers, till they had got beyond the confines of the parish. After some delay had taken place, the General Assembly ordered the presbytery to proceed with the ordination; and and having obtained the assistance of a company of soldiers, they were enabled the next time they returned, to accomplish their object.\*

Such was the *working* of the law of patronage in this country, and such were the tender mercies of the dominant party in the Assembly toward the people. Amid scenes similar to those now described did the cause of the Secession acquire daily strength; and fully to appreciate the value of the Secession to the country, it is proper to bear in mind, that such scenes were by no means of rare occurrence in the Scottish Church. That the country does not still continue to be distracted by them, has been owing in a great measure to the existence of the Secession. It opened up a quiet asylum for the people to enter, where the ordinances of religion were dispensed to them by ministers of their own choice, and where they could enjoy the solemnity of an ordination without being *sabred* into submission, or overawed by the terrors of the bayonet.

While the Secession Church had to contend with opposition from without, its harmony was occasionally disturbed by feuds within. These latter, however, were, for the most part, but of short continuance, and the effects of them passed speedily away. An instance of this kind occurred at the present period of my narrative. A controversy, occasioned by a diversity in the mode of dispensing the ordinance of the Lord's

\* Struthers' History of Scotland, vol. ii. p. 608.

Supper, arose in the west of Scotland ; and though the point in dispute was really a matter of indifference, as not involving, either one way or another, any essential article of the Christian faith, yet those with whom the controversy originated, attached so much importance to it, that nothing less would satisfy them than bringing their brethren to a complete uniformity of sentiment with themselves ; and by the obstinacy with which they persevered in urging the adopting of their views, they kept many of the congregations in a state of agitation for several years.

Some of the ministers, in administering the sacrament of the Lord's Supper, did not take the bread and the cup into their hand previous to the consecration prayer, but lifted them only when they were about to put them into the hands of the communicants. Others, constituting by far the largest portion of the synod, before engaging in prayer, lifted a portion of the bread and the cup ; and then, after prayer, and an address to the communicants, took them into their hand a second time, and distributed them in the usual manner. Mr. David Smyton, minister at Kilmaurs, was one of those who adopted this latter mode ; and he considered the "lifting" of the sacred elements *before* the consecration prayer as constituting an essential part of the ordinance. He was desirous that a uniformity should be observed in this matter, and that those brethren, whose practice differed from his own, should be authoritatively enjoined to adopt the same method which he pursued. A petition from Mr. Smyton and his session, brought the business before the Glasgow presbytery, and the presbytery referred the matter for advice to the synod. The advice given by the synod, at their spring meeting in 1782, was, that this was a question with regard to which those, who entertained different views, ought to exercise mutual forbearance. On the 21st of May, the same year, the session of Kilmaurs presented a petition to the presbytery, urging them to give an immediate decision in their cause ; and when the presbytery had expressed their judgment, concerning the advice given by the synod, as most proper to be adopted in present circumstances, and were about to converse with the petitioners, conformably to said advice, Mr. Smyton protested, in his own name, and in the name of those who should adhere to him, against this procedure of the presbytery ; declaring, that it "gave a wound to the testimony among their hands ;" that it "settled a boundless toleration contrary to the above testimony ;" that it "laid aside the command, injunction, and example of our Lord, in the way of appointing and administering the solemn ordinance of the Supper ;" and that it "brought in the Confession of Faith as opposite to the plain scriptural

rule above mentioned :” and he appealed to the next meeting of synod. At meetings of presbytery, held on the 31st of July and on the 26th of August, petitions and remonstrances on the same subject were presented from a number of people belonging to the congregations of Kilmaurs, Kilwinning, Paisley, Greenock, and Beith, all of which were transmitted, along with Mr. Smyton’s protest, to the synod.

In the month of september the synod met, and when they were about to enter upon the consideration of this cause, Mr. Gib laid the following protest upon the table :—“ Whereas several ministers of this synod, of whom I am one, when dispensing the Sacrament of the Lord’s Supper in our congregations, do not practise the taking or the lifting up of a part of the bread and wine, with a laying or setting of the same down again, before consecration, or before setting them apart by prayer from a common to a holy use, only taking up these elements, when so consecrated, for breaking and distributing the same ; in which method of procedure we apprehend ourselves to be warranted, yea, to which we reckon ourselves to be obligated, by Scripture and reason, and our subordinate standards. And whereas we have never attempted, as we never had any freedom, to disturb the peace of the church, by stating and prosecuting any quarrel with our brethren of a different practice, leaving them to their own freedom, as to the said first taking or lifting up, while not grafting any doctrines upon that practice, unto a making any addition to the mystical significations which our Lord hath put upon things and actions of the Sacramental Supper : But whereas a brother of Glasgow presbytery has been labouring very industriously and effectually in begetting a ferment among the people, and raising many of them up into a seditious clamour against our said method of procedure in dispensing that sacrament, as if the same were sinful and scandalous : And whereas the said brother and his partisans, who are attempting to get that affair pushed into a general discussion by this synod, cannot pretend that they are seeking relief from any imposition upon themselves, or a redress of any evil supposed to take place under the synod’s authority ; but it is most unquestionable, that their whole attempt, in this matter, is only meant as a material and underhand or secret attack upon us, as to our said method of procedure ;

“ I do therefore, hereby protest for myself, and for all others upon whom this covert attack is made, that the said brother and his partisans cannot fairly and honestly bring this affair before the synod, except in the way of a formal and particular complaint upon us, exhibiting special articles against us ; with a specification of the passages of the Holy Scriptures,

and of our subordinate standards, and of our ordination vows, which we are supposed to contravene, or trample upon by our said method of procedure : And that this synod cannot regularly give them a hearing upon this affair in any other manner ; and that any proposal by them for a hearing upon it in any other manner, or in the manner now attempted, ought to be simpliciter rejected, in common justice to us ; that we may not be struck at underhand, in a deceitful and injurious manner, but in the way of a fair and open trial, upon which we are ready to answer for our conduct. And upon all this I take instruments. ADAM GIB."

Upon this protest the synod pronounced no judgment, but entered upon the consideration of the general question. After considerable discussion, they dismissed Mr. Smyton's protest and appeal ; and in reference to the remonstrances and petitions from the different congregations, above mentioned, they renewed their advice formerly given to the Glasgow presbytery, viz. That the brethren exercise forbearance with one another in this matter ; that they inform the people, that the synod reckon it very unjustifiable for them to endeavour to impose their judgment upon others in this affair ; and that they deal with them to guard against reflections upon those who observe a practice different from what they think best ; and that if they find it difficult to deal with the people, they call in the assistance of members of other presbyteries, as they find it necessary. It was further recommended to the members of presbytery to hold meetings among themselves for prayer and conference on the subject. A recommendation was also given to the people to converse with their own or other ministers, with a view to get their difficulties removed : and to peruse the Holy Scriptures, the Confession of Faith, the Catechisms and Directory for public worship, with fervent supplication to God for light in the matter.

When this decision was intimated to the parties, Mr. Smyton offered to protest : but a promise being given him, that he would afterwards have an opportunity afforded him of marking what he might think necessary for his exoneration, he was induced, in the meantime, to forbear. At a subsequent sederunt, he presented the following paper, and craved that it might be recorded in the minutes :—" I, Mr. David Smyton, minister of the gospel at Kilmaurs, crave to express my dissatisfaction with the judgment of synod, with reference to our protestation and appeal : At the same time, I crave leave that this expression of my dissatisfaction be recorded in the minutes of synod, for my exoneration, and that the door be left open to me at next meeting of synod to act therein as the Lord shall direct."

At next meeting, held in May 1783, Mr. Smyton again made his appearance, and insisted that, according to the liberty formerly granted, he might be allowed to state his sentiments. As he was now labouring under the infirmities of age, and had been long in the ministry, and was generally respected, the synod were averse to push matters to an extremity with him. They appointed a committee to converse with him on the subject, and to report at next sederunt. On the following forenoon, the committee reported, "that they had met and conversed with Mr. Smyton, but found him resolute." Mr. Smyton then addressed the synod, and urged the reversal of their deed of September 4th, last year, for mutual forbearance concerning the difference of practice, in the administration of the Lord's Supper. A considerable time was spent in endeavouring to show him, that he had mistaken the deed; and a motion was made, that a committee be appointed to explain it, with a view to the removal of Mr. Smyton's scruples. But Mr. Smyton declared, that he would not attend a committee, that he was now come to a stand in the matter, and was determined that something satisfactory should be done at this meeting. After he had been dealt with for some time, he gave in a paper, renouncing the authority of the synod, and declaring that he could no longer have connexion with them, on account of their refusing to reverse the obnoxious deed. When he was about to withdraw, the synod summoned him, *apud acta*, to attend at their bar next day; and, in the meantime, they appointed a committee to prepare an overture about what was proper to be done in the circumstances of the case.

When the synod met next forenoon, Mr. Smyton was called, but did not appear; and the committee, appointed to prepare an overture on the subject, reported, that however much lenity and tenderness were due to Mr. Smyton, on account of the infirmities of old age, yet his conduct in the present instance had been so obstinate and offensive, as to render it proper that censure should be inflicted on him, unless he should appear at the bar of the synod and retract the paper which he had given in on the preceding evening. As he did not make his appearance, the synod suspended him from the exercise of his ministry.

This question, however, was not set at rest by Mr. Smyton ceasing to be a member of synod. Trial though it may appear, it still continued to agitate some of the congregations. In September, 1784, a petition from some members, belonging to the congregation in Glasgow, was brought before the synod by protest, in which they craved, that the synod would review their act of forbearance, respecting the mode of administering the Lord's Supper. This petition

and protest the synod dismissed ; but they appointed a committee to prepare an explanation and vindication of their act, with a view to remove misconceptions concerning it from the minds of the people. The committee were inclined to let the matter slumber, and they delayed for some time giving any report. But Mr. Graham of Newcastle having represented, that the state of his congregation was such as to render an explanation necessary, the synod renewed their injunction to the committee to prepare without delay an explanatory statement. The following resolutions were presented by the committee, and being approved of, as expressive of the sentiments of the synod with regard to the question in dispute, they were ordered to be inserted in the minutes.

“ First, There were various circumstances in our Lord’s institution and administration of the Sacramental Supper, some of which always, and others of them for many hundreds of years bypast, have been generally considered as occasional circumstances, not belonging to the standing order, in the dispensing of that ordinance : as it was then dispensed at night, and in an upper room, and after supper, and to all at one table, and to them in a leaning posture, and only to male communicants, though our Lord had then some very distinguished female disciples ; and as Jesus blessed or gave thanks when he took the bread, he likewise again blessed or gave thanks when he took the cup.

“ Second, The present difference of practice in the taking of the sacramental elements, turns wholly on this point,—that many of the ministers consider the aforesaid first taking as belonging to the standing order of the Sacramental Supper, in the proper, complete, decent, and solemn manner of its administration, conformable to our Lord’s example ; while several others of them consider that first taking, as an occasional circumstance of the first administration, not belonging to the said standing order, or not recorded for imitation more than the other occasional circumstances which are above mentioned, nor warranted as such in our standards.

“ Third, This difference of practice nowise imports or means any difference about the matter or substance of that holy ordinance ; while no material or substantial part thereof is, or can be, justly considered as lying in the one manner or practice, or the other : as it is agreed on both sides, that the mystical or spiritual and symbolical significations of things and actions in that sacrament, are not to be extended further than our Lord extended the same by the words of institution ; and that they are not extended further on the one hand, nor abridged on the other, by the said difference of practice.

“ Fourth, This difference of practice, as presently circum-

stantiated, is not known to have ever undergone any public discussion and decision in any Christian church, so as to give a place to the one manner or practice preferably to the other, among the terms of church order and communion. The said difference is therefore most unquestionably a matter of doubtful disputation, about which, according to the plain rule of scripture, there ought to be a forbearing of one another in love—every man to be fully persuaded in his own mind, without presuming to judge and condemn other in that difference.

“The synod’s resolution of mutual forbearance in this matter, has been most grievously and groundlessly calumniated, as if it meant a laying aside the command, injunction, and example of our Lord, in the way of appointing and administering the solemn ordinance of the Supper, &c.; whereas it is obvious, that the said resolution means nothing more than forbearing of one another in love, about a circumstance of doubtful disputation, no way affecting the matter or substance of that solemn ordinance; that it means no sort of toleration for any thing judged or supposed by them, or known to have been ever judged or supposed in any Christian church, to be an evil thing; and that it only cautions against strife or contention about the above-mentioned difference of practice, unto a marring of peace, communion, and mutual edification among ministers and people; so that when any find themselves obliged, in necessary self-defence, to give an account for the one practice, they might do so without impugning or inveighing against the other. Wherefore, it is evident, that a persisting in the heavy reproaches which have been cast upon the synod about this affair, can only proceed from ignorance or misapprehension, and the working of a schismatical spirit, unto an unchristian judging or condemning of others.”

The adopting of these explanatory resolutions had a favourable effect; for immediately after this, the controversy was consigned to oblivion.

At this period, meetings were held by ministers and people in different districts both of Scotland and Ireland, the object of which was to promote a union betwixt the two bodies of the Secession; and an overture to this effect was presented to the synod, at their meeting in May, 1784, from the presbytery of Moyrah and Lisburn in Ireland; and this overture was accompanied by a petition from the presbytery of Newtonlimavady, cordially concurring in the same object. In these documents, the Irish brethren recommended to the synod to adopt as a “preliminary ground for a treaty of peace and union,” “That both parties declare their adherence to

the whole of the Secession Testimony attained to, while they were united ; that is, all that was attained to, antecedent to the meeting of synod in April, 1747." They expressed their hope, that the brethren of the other side would not object to this ground as the basis of union ; and they added,—“ If this point were once settled, and a treaty set on foot on this ground, that, through the Lord's blessing on friendly conference, with fervent prayer, and a mutual dropping of all criminations, which respect rather the honour of the parties than the merits of the cause, and the testimony which they espouse,—such as the propriety of the censures on the one side, and the validity of the synod's constitution on the other,—both parties, so long and unhappily divided, might come to see eye to eye, and with one mind and one mouth glorify God : And the Secession Church, united in public testimony and mutual love, should again, as in former times, look forth fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners.” The petition from the presbytery of Newtonlimavady included in it a request, that the synod would sanction the presbyteries of Ireland erecting themselves into a court, as a sister church.

The synod expressed their disapprobation of the overture introduced by the presbytery of Moyrah. They declared it to be “ incompetent and irregular for ministers or private Christians to take under review, in order to re-judge and determine, without the authority of this synod, the matters of public difference between this synod and the separating brethren, which nearly relate to the common cause, and which have already been decided by the supreme judicatory.” They further declared, “ that terms of coalescence cannot consistently be listened unto at any time, by the synod, or any under their inspection, with any who still continue to homologate or adhere unto any act or acts pretending to annul the constitution, and annihilate the authority of the synod.” To these declarations they subjoined, that while the door was always open to receive persons of every denomination into their communion, upon the terms and in the manner which they had openly avowed to the world, and from which they had never seen any cause to recede ; “ so they would in particular be most ready to receive into connexion with them their separating brethren, or those of their communion, upon due evidence of their desisting from their opposition, and returning to their duty ; and when any applications or proposals should be made with such a view and tendency, they would be considered with that serious attention and deliberation, which the nature and importance of such a subject requires, and with all the alacrity

and sincere satisfaction, which such a long-wished for and desirable event might justly excite."

With regard to the proposal to erect the Irish presbyteries into a synod, which should be regarded as a sister church, it was rejected on the ground that such a measure was inconsistent with the unity of the church of Christ, and would be prejudicial to the general interests of the Secession. These decisions were not satisfactory to the Irish brethren. They sent up a representation at next meeting, complaining of what the synod had done, and craving that they would review their deed. This second application shared the same fate with the first. The synod not only refused to grant the prayer of the petitioners, but they expressed disapprobation of their conduct, in not resting satisfied with the decisions which had formerly been given. They agreed, however, to express their sympathy with the brethren in Ireland, "in their present hazardous circumstances," and they appointed a committee to correspond with them relative to the matters, concerning which application had been made to the synod.

On a recommendation given by the committee for examining the students, the Philosophical Class, which for several years had been taught by Mr. Smart at Kirkaldy, was at this time removed to Edinburgh, under the superintendence of the same person, that the students who were attending his prelections might have an opportunity of devoting their attention to other departments of literature. None were to be admitted to the study of philosophy, under Mr. Smart, who did not produce a certificate of their having previously studied the Greek language; and though it was not rendered imperative on any of the students to attend this class, provided they studied philosophy at some of the universities, yet a recommendation was given to all to attend it, who might have in view the study of divinity, under the inspection of the synod.

Intelligence reached the synod concerning the state of affairs in America, which was by no means gratifying to them. Almost all the brethren belonging to the presbytery of Pennsylvania \* had, in the month of June, 1782, formed a union with the Reformed Presbytery in that country (connected with the anti-government party, as they were termed, in Scotland),

\* The names of these brethren who formed the union with the Reformed Presbytery, were—Messrs. James Proudfoot, Matthew Henderson, John Mason, Robert Annan, John Smith, and William Logan; together with Mr. John Roger, who, some time previous to this, had been deposed by the presbytery, on the ground of error. A few years after this, Mr. Henderson made application to be restored to the presbytery of Pennsylvania; and having made acknowledgment of his guilt "in departing from his former profession," the brethren again received him into their communion.

and with two ministers belonging to the Burgher Secession Synod. These brethren, thus united, had constituted themselves into a synod, under the designation of *The Associate Reformed Synod*. Messrs. Marshall and Clarkson were the only ministers, belonging to the presbytery, who refused to join the coalition, and who continued firm to their old connexion. These two brethren, along with three elders who adhered to them, claimed the authority of the Associate Presbytery in Pennsylvania. Letters were sent home by them to the synod, stating their destitute circumstances, and earnestly requesting that additional ministers might be sent out, as they were totally unable, on account of the smallness of their number, to answer the demands that were made upon them for preaching. The synod ordered Mr. Thomas Beveridge to be ordained by the Edinburgh Presbytery, and to proceed without delay to that scene of labour.\* They also appointed a committee to prepare an address to the ministers and people in Pennsylvania, who continued in subordination to the synod, and to consider what measures it might be proper to adopt, with regard to those who had renounced their connexion.

In August, 1785, the synod called for the report of the committee appointed to prepare an address to the ministers and people belonging to their communion in North America. Mr. Gib presented the draught of an act and an address, which, after receiving some amendments, was adopted, and transmitted to the presbytery in Pennsylvania. The draught of a more voluminous address was also read, intended for general circulation amongst the Seceders in America; but the synod, finding that their time did not permit them to revise and consider it with that care which its importance demanded, and, also, that the confirmed state of the breach which had taken place amongst the American brethren, rendered some parts of it unsuitable, laid it aside, and rested satisfied with the expression of their sentiments contained in the act now mentioned.

In this document they expressed their disapprobation of the conduct of those brethren who had renounced connexion with the synod, and who had coalesced with ministers of other denominations, "on terms so loose and general, as to throw open the door to the grossest latitudinarianism." They disclaimed all connexion with, and acknowledgment of, "the body so constituted;" and they declared the brethren who had joined it, "to be in a state of apostacy from their reformation testimony and their witnessing profession." On the other

\* Mr. Beveridge, after receiving ordination, left Scotland in the end of 1783, and was admitted to the charge of a congregation at Cambridge, in America, on the 10th of September, 1789.

hand, they expressed their approbation of the conduct of those ministers and elders who had continued firm in their allegiance to the synod. They considered it a matter of great thankfulness to the Lord, that these brethren had "been enabled to proceed with honesty, faithfulness, and zeal, according to their ordination vows and solemn covenant engagements, in maintaining the Lord's cause among their hands." They further declared, that, as these brethren had entered a protest against the decision of the majority agreeing to the union, and had appealed to the synod, which protest and appeal had been refused a place in the minutes; and as they had entered another protest against this refusal, and claimed to have the powers of the Associate Presbytery of Pennsylvania rightfully vested in them, as being the only members adhering to its original constitution and principles; they therefore recognised and justified the constitution of the presbytery, as claimed by these protesting ministers and elders; and they acknowledged them to be the only lawful and rightly constituted presbytery of Pennsylvania, in connexion with, and subordinate to, the synod in Scotland.

With the view of strengthening the hands of the brethren in Pennsylvania, the synod resolved that they would immediately undertake new missions to that country; but they had considerable difficulty in getting their benevolent resolution carried into effect. There was a decided aversion, on the part of the young men under their charge, to undertake transatlantic missions. By far the greater number of those who were appointed to this honourable work, refused to go. At this meeting they appointed Mr. James Hog to be ordained by the presbytery of Glasgow, and to depart for America by the earliest opportunity; and a recommendation was given to the several presbyteries to make contributions, either publicly or privately, to defray the expense of the mission. Mr. Hog proved refractory. The presbytery afterward reported, that though they had dealt with him, at several meetings, to fulfil the appointment of synod, they had been unsuccessful. They further stated, that, in his conversations with them, he had given offence, by uttering sentiments subversive of the subordination of ecclesiastical judicatories; particularly, that he did not consider that the presbytery of Pennsylvania was bound to obey the decisions of the synod, as none of its members had it in their power to be present at the meetings of synod. It was considered inexpedient to insist upon his fulfilling the appointment, and a committee of synod was appointed to obtain satisfaction from him, for the offensive language which he had uttered. This satisfaction the committee obtained, and Mr. Hog was soon afterward ordained at Kelso.

In the meantime, another communication was received (May, 1786) from the brethren in Pennsylvania, stating what strong necessity there was for a reinforcement of ministers being sent to them from the mother country, as numerous and urgent applications were made to them for sermon, which, in their present reduced state, they were unable to grant. Moved by this representation, the synod again took the matter into serious consideration; and, after prayer to God for the divine direction and blessing, they appointed Mr. William Puller to go on a mission to America; and the presbytery of Perth, under whose inspection he then resided, was enjoined either to send him forth immediately, or to take him on trials for ordination, according as time and circumstances might permit. At the next meeting, the presbytery reported, that they had been unable to prevail upon Mr. Puller to yield compliance with this appointment; at the same time they stated, by way of apology for him, that he had been partly hindered by distress. The synod refused to withdraw their appointment, and insisted that Mr. Puller should comply. They also appointed Mr. John Smith, another of their preachers, to accompany him. The result, with regard to both of these individuals, was unsuccessful. Neither of them crossed the Atlantic.

At the same meeting at which the above communication was received from Pennsylvania, a petition was presented from a number of the inhabitants of Pictou, in Nova Scotia, craving that Mr. James Drummond Macgregor might be sent to labour amongst them. Mr. Macgregor had been born upon the borders of the Highlands, and was capable of preaching in Gaelic as well as in English. This circumstance was mentioned by the petitioners as a reason why the services of Mr. Macgregor would be peculiarly valuable in Pictou, seeing that many of the inhabitants of that town and neighbourhood were of Highland origin, and were desirous to obtain a minister who could address them in their native language. The synod readily acceded to the request of these individuals. Mr. Macgregor also showed a willingness to comply. He was ordained in the course of a few weeks after the meeting of synod, by the presbytery of Glasgow, and soon after embarked for Nova Scotia.

On the 4th of August, 1786, Mr. William Moncrieff, Professor of Divinity, died; and, at their meeting in September, the synod chose Mr. Archibald Bruce, minister of the gospel at Whitburn, to be his successor. Mr. Moncrieff had occupied the Theological Chair for four and twenty years, during which period he had discharged the duties of his office with

great fidelity and acceptance. His labours also were quite disinterested. Following in the footsteps of his venerable father, he refused to receive any emolument as Professor. In consideration of his valuable and gratuitous services, the synod agreed, after his death, to give £20 a-year out of their fund, for the benefit of his younger children, so long as they should need it. They further agreed, that Mr. Bruce, their newly elected Professor, should receive an annual salary of £50, on account of the trouble and expense connected with his charge.

At this period, a proposal was made, that the synod should consider the propriety of constituting itself into a General Synod or Assembly, consisting of several subordinate synods, whose meetings should be held in central situations, so that members residing at a distance might have it in their power more conveniently to attend. The wide extent of territory over which the congregations in connexion with the synod, were scattered, rendered it expedient that some alteration should be made, with a view to the accommodation of members, and also to facilitate the conducting of business. During the forty years that had now nearly elapsed, since the breach took place, this portion of the Secession had been successful in planting congregations, not merely in the central districts, but in the northern counties of Scotland, as well as in the south and west. It had also a considerable number of congregations in Ireland; and the inconvenience of a journey to Edinburgh, to attend the meetings of synod, must have been felt to be so great, by the representatives of the Irish congregations, that they could scarcely, if ever, be present. To remedy this evil, a petition was transmitted from the presbytery of Moyrah and Lisburn, craving that the presbyteries in Ireland might be erected into a synod not subordinate to the synod in Scotland, but co-ordinate with it; or, should this be refused, that a General Synod should be formed, having several synods under its jurisdiction in Scotland, and one in Ireland. This proposal was laid before the synod at its meeting in May 1786, and a committee was appointed to take the subject into consideration, and to report at next meeting. A recommendation was also given to the several presbyteries, to consider the proposal, that they might be prepared to give an opinion concerning it.

At next meeting, nothing further was done in the matter; but at the spring meeting of the following year, the committee presented the scheme of a division into particular synods, with accompanying regulations. These were transmitted to the presbyteries, that they might consider them, and report their opinion to the committee. Another year passed before the synod

resumed the consideration of the subject. In the month of May 1788, the reports of the several presbyteries were received; and, though some of them objected to particular parts of the proposed arrangement, there was a decided majority in favour of the general design of the overture. A long discussion ensued, and several of the brethren were employed in prayer for the divine direction on the subject; after which the vote was taken upon the following question, *Agree to adopt the general design of the overture, in erecting different synods in subordination to one General Synod? Or, Lay it aside?* when it carried by a considerable majority, *To adopt.*

The different presbyteries in connexion with the association, were constituted into four synods, viz. three in Scotland, and one in Ireland, which were to be in subordination to one General Synod; and the following was the arrangement which the synod sanctioned:—The presbytery of Edinburgh, consisting of the ministers of the congregations of Edinburgh, Howgate, Elsrigghill, Eastbarns, Craigmalling, Mid-Calder, Borrowstounness, Whitburn, Dalkeith, Ayton, Lauder, Haddington, and London, with a ruling elder from each of the sessions; the presbytery of Kelso, consisting of the ministers of the congregations of Dunse, Earlston, Midholm, Norham, Newcastle, Jedburgh, Hawick, Morebattle, Kelso, and Peebles, with a ruling elder from each of the sessions; and the presbytery of Dumfries, consisting of the ministers of the congregations of Orr, Lockerby, Dumfries, Stranraer, Sanquhar, Glencairn, Wigton, and Whitehaven, with a ruling elder from each of the sessions, were erected into a synod, under the designation of the Associate Synod of Edinburgh. They were appointed to hold their first meeting at Edinburgh, on the first Tuesday of September, and Mr. Gib was appointed to preach on the occasion, and to constitute the synod.

The presbytery of Perth, consisting of the ministers of the congregations of Kinkell, Methven, Logie-Almond, Errol, Crieff, Abernethy, Perth, Cupar-Angus, Pathstruyhill, and Lethendy, with a ruling elder from each of the sessions; the presbytery of Kirkaldy, consisting of the ministers of the congregations of Cairneyhill, Leslie, Kirkaldy, Ceres, Auchtermuchty, and Orwell, with a ruling elder from each of the sessions; and the presbytery of Forfar, consisting of the ministers of the congregations of Rattray, Brechin, Johnshaven, Dunbarrow, Kirriemuir, Dundee, Forfar, and Alyth, with a ruling elder from each of the sessions, including also the vacant congregations of Montrose, Muirton, Arbroath, and Ennoch, were erected into a synod, under the designation of the Associate Synod of Perth. Their first meeting was to be held at Perth, on the first Tuesday of September,

and Mr. Muckersie was appointed to preach and constitute the synod.\*

The presbytery of Glasgow, consisting of the ministers of the congregations of Glasgow, Paisley, Greenock, Strathaven, Mearns, Hamilton, Rothsay, and Pictou in Nova Scotia, with a ruling elder from each of the sessions; and the presbytery of Stirling, consisting of the ministers of the congregations of Denny, Stirling, Dunblane, Buchlyvie, Muchart, Falkirk, Balfron, and Alloa, with a ruling elder from each of the sessions; and the presbytery of Kilmarnock, consisting of the ministers of the congregations of Kilwinning, Auchinleck, Beith, Newmilns, Kilmarnock, Colmonell, and Ayr, with a ruling elder from each of the sessions, were erected into a synod, under the designation of the Associate Synod of Glasgow. They were appointed to hold their first meeting at Glasgow, on the same day as the others. Mr. Walker was to preach, and constitute the synod.

In Ireland, the presbytery of Belfast, consisting of the ministers of the congregations of Gilnakirk, Hillhall, Bally-Copeland, Belfast, and Newtonards with a ruling elder from each of the sessions; the presbytery of Market-hill, consisting of the ministers of the congregations of Market-hill, Tyrone's Ditches, Newry, and Moyrah, with a ruling elder from each of the sessions; the presbytery of Derry, consisting of the ministers of the congregations of Newtonlimavady, Raphoe, Ahadowie, and Londonderry, with a ruling elder from each of the sessions; and the presbytery of Temple-patrick and Ahoghill, consisting of the ministers of the congregations of Temple-patrick, Roseyards, Ballyeston, and Lorne, and Isle Magee, with a ruling elder from each of the sessions, were erected into a synod, under the designation of the Associate Synod of Ireland. Their first meeting was appointed to be held at Belfast, on the first Tuesday of August, and Mr. D. Arrot was appointed to preach on the occasion, and to constitute the synod.

The first day of the meeting of each synod was to be observed as a synodical fast; and all the presbyteries were to meet in one General Associate Synod, at Edinburgh, on the last Wednesday of April in the following year. It was further resolved, that the first day of their meeting should be spent in fasting and in devotional exercises. The services of the forenoon were to be commenced with prayer, by Mr. A. Bunyan, after which a discourse was to be delivered by the moderator; and the services of the afternoon were to be commenced with

\* The presbyteries of Aberdeen and Elgin were to be under the immediate inspection of the General Synod, until another presbytery should be formed in the north, when they were to be erected into another provincial synod.

prayer, by Mr. M'George, after which Mr. Buist was to preach.

To prevent confusion in the conducting of business, and to mark out the proper order to be observed by the General Synod, as well as by the subordinate synods, in the determining of those causes that might come before them, the following regulations were adopted.

I. That the General Synod shall consist of all the ministers of the provincial synods and presbyteries subordinate to it, with one ruling elder to be chosen by their respective sessions; that an elder, who shall be admitted to a seat in it, shall bring with him a written attestation, subscribed by the moderator or clerk, bearing that he is an elder, in the full exercise of his office, and that he was chosen in a meeting of session, to which members were duly called; but, if disputed, it shall be referred to a committee.

II. That the quorum of the General Synod shall be sixteen, of whom there shall be at least twelve ministers; which number being met, they shall be competent to proceed to business.

III. That the synod shall be employed in prayer, during a part of one day, at each of their meetings.

IV. That the General Synod shall have the business that properly belongs to the supreme court; that is, all causes brought by appeal or reference, for being decided by a court of the last resort; all acts respecting the Secession in general; acts as to the public profession and testimony made by the synod; acts appointing the questions to be put to ministers and elders, at their ordination, or to preachers at receiving licence; terms of ministerial and Christian communion; the erection of synods or presbyteries; the disjoining of presbyteries from synods; the enacting of rules for the proceedings of the inferior courts, and whatever is competent and proper for the synod, as having the inspection of the whole Secession Church; but that the General Synod shall not disjoin a presbytery from one synod, and annex it to another, at the meeting at which this is first proposed, but shall delay it to their following meeting, unless the consent of both synods and presbyteries concerned be duly notified to the General Synod.

V. That the General Synod shall (as the Associate Synod hitherto have done) continue to direct as to the admission of young men to the study of divinity; the appointing of students of divinity for trials, in order to their preaching the gospel in the different presbyteries; the appointing of foreign missions; and the appointing of preachers to the several synods or presbyteries; and that they shall retain the inspection and manage-

ment of their public fund, and of the fund for the widows and children of ministers throughout Britain, in indigent circumstances; but that the synod of Ireland shall have their widows' fund under their own inspection. The General Synod to have committees, as usual, in the Associate Synod, or such other committees as they shall appoint, with power, after any matter has been heard before a committee, to sub-commit for facilitating business.

VI. That the Moderator may call a meeting *pro re nata*, if the General Synod shall, on some supposed probable necessity, recommend such a meeting to be called, with advice of some brethren or presbyteries; or, if some business of any great importance occur in the intervals of the meetings of the General Synod, he may call one at the desire, or with the concurrence of two provincial synods, or with the advice and concurrence of one-third of the presbyteries, if the provincial synods have not their meetings at the time, such business shall be made known to him; that the calling of meetings *pro re nata* be forty days preceding the meeting, by letters subscribed by the moderator, and regularly sent to every minister.

VII. That no appeal shall be received from a presbytery to the General Synod, in the way of passing over the synod of their bounds, unless the appeal has been made since their synod had a meeting, and at least twenty days have elapsed from the making of their appeal to the meeting of the General Synod.

VIII. That the synod books shall be regularly brought up by rotation to the General Synod, from one or two synods, as the General Synod shall find the revival of them to be practicable.

IX. That each provincial synod shall be furnished with a copy of the minutes of the General Synod, to be kept by them *in retentis*.

The following were the regulations respecting provincial synods:—

I. That the business, which cannot be determined by a provincial synod, by reason of another provincial synod having interest therein, shall be referred to the General Synod, and the other synod duly informed of the reference.

II. That provincial synods may, if they see it necessary, disjoin congregations from one of their presbyteries and annex them to another; but that they shall report their having done so to the first meeting of the General Synod for their review.

III. It is recommended to the several provincial synods, that they appoint correspondents to each other, as often as the

distance between the places of their meetings and the other work of ministers will admit; and especially when they apply to each other for such correspondence.

The following regulations were transmitted to presbyteries, to be observed by them in the meantime, so far as might be found for general edification: But they were to have them under their serious consideration, and to report their judgment concerning them, at the first meeting of the General Synod.

I. The provincial synods shall transmit without delay, such preachers as have a call from any congregation within their bounds to the presbytery that has the inspection of that congregation.

II. The provincial synods and presbyteries shall exchange such preachers as have calls (or one of whom has a call) within other synods or presbyteries, that they may go to the presbyteries where the calls are come out; provided there are no competing calls for these preachers.

III. That it be recommended to presbyteries, who may be adjacent to one another, to exchange, or give some days of preachers to each other; and that presbyteries who have many show this kindness to those who have fewer; so that there may be proper supply to vacancies and other places, and that preachers may have a proper course through vacancies.

IV. That when the members of any congregation, under the inspection of the General Synod, shall be declared by their presbytery able to support a settled ministry, they may apply to their own presbytery for a hearing of any preachers, that have been two months in the bounds of another presbytery; and having obtained the concurrence of their own presbytery, the other presbytery shall, on an application to them, send the preacher applied for, without delay, to preach at least two Sabbaths in that congregation; provided he has been two months in their own bounds, and not appointed on trials for ordination: And the presbytery that has said congregation under their inspection, shall appoint one of their preachers to supply the place of the one that comes on such petition, if they have any preacher able to go on such a journey; but if they have none able to go, or the distance be great, the presbytery that sends the preacher shall be preferable in the next appointments of the General Synod: But that in case of such a request being refused, though congregations may obtain hearings of preachers from their being detained by any presbytery contrary to this regulation; yet such hearings shall not be reckoned lawful and regular in order to a call: Such exchange to be at the expense of the congregation that petitions.

V. This is only to be applied to congregations as above described, and not to new erections unable to support a fixed ministry: Complaints of a refusal to be allowed in ordinary course of appeals to provincial synods and to the General Synod.

After completing these arrangements, the synod directed their attention to a variety of questions, in which the prosperity of religion and the general interests of humanity, were deeply involved. That great and benevolent movement had already commenced in our country, which terminated in the final overthrow of that abominable traffic in human flesh, by which the annals of the civilized world had been so long degraded, viz. the slave-trade. The cries of the suffering sons of Africa, had reached the shores of Britain, and a band of philanthropists, moved with compassion on account of the innumerable wrongs inflicted on that injured race, and burning with shame on account of the dishonour which the toleration of such a traffic brought upon our own country, resolved on making the generous but bold attempt, to put an end to this infamous commerce, which was no less opposed to the claims of justice, than to the dictates of humanity, and which, for ages, had been the means of inflicting innumerable woes upon the human race. In this noble effort to break asunder the fetters of the slave, and to vindicate the insulted rights of humanity, the Secession Church bore its share. It responded to the first call given to the friends of religion on this subject; and, amid all the alternations of the protracted struggle, to which this humane attempt gave rise, it persevered fighting side by side with the heroic and calumniated benefactors of the African, until the battle was ended and the victory won.

On the 6th of May, 1788, a motion was made that the synod should give a public declaration of their sentiments on this subject. Some proposed that a petition should be presented to Parliament, in name of the synod; others were averse to this mode of procedure, and were of opinion, that instead of petitioning, they should draw up a declaration of their sentiments, and publish it in several of the newspapers. This latter proposal was adopted; and the following declaration was drawn up, and ordered to be published.

1. "The Associate Synod, taking under consideration a proposal for petitioning Parliament on the subject of the slave-trade, though they do not judge it expedient, as a synod, to appear in the character of petitioners, yet they are unanimous in expressing their hearty concurrence with their fellow-subjects throughout the kingdom, who have declared their abhorrence of that infamous system, so inconsistent with religion and humanity, and their earnest wishes that measures may be

speedily adopted for the effectual abolition of it. And they feelingly regret the wretched situation of that poor people who have so long suffered by it, not only on account of their being deprived of their natural liberties, but chiefly because of their being, for the most part, kept in ignorance of the saving doctrines and invaluable blessings of Christianity; and they especially wish that the present attention bestowed on that subject, and the exertions used for their emancipation from outward slavery, may be accompanied with no less zealous and vigorous efforts for promoting their spiritual and eternal welfare."

A proposal was also made at this meeting to celebrate the centenary of the memorable Revolution, in 1688, by appointing a day of solemn thanksgiving. This proposal met with some opposition; and, after the synod had agreed to adopt it, Messrs. Russell, Cleland, Bruce, Thomson of Sanquhar, Stewart, Taylor, and Puller, craved to have it marked, that they were opposed to the motion. The following was the resolution which the synod adopted:—

"The synod, taking into their serious consideration the wonderful deliverance wrought for these lands, at the Revolution, in the latter end of the year 1688, with the continuance thereupon of civil and religious liberty to us ever since that time, notwithstanding of different attempts to deprive us of it, they find that this calls loudly for gratitude and thanksgiving; and they judge it necessary to commemorate in this manner, that, when our forefathers, in the period previous to the time referred to, were on the point of being swallowed up in the dreadful gulph of popery and tyranny, the Lord brought deliverance to us, in a very wonderful manner, and from a very unexpected quarter, by means of the Prince of Orange, afterwards King William III. They do not judge that the defects of the Revolution settlement, frequently testified against in former acts of this synod, should abate our thankfulness for the great and invaluable blessings bestowed upon us in, and resulting from, that wonderful deliverance; though our thankfulness ought to be accompanied with lamentation, because of the said defects, and our woful abuse of that signal interposition of Providence; and therefore the synod agree and appoint, that Wednesday, the 5th day of November this year, be observed in solemn thanksgiving and prayer, through all their congregations, with the vacant communities under their inspection; and that this their act be duly intimated in their several congregations, on the Lord's day immediately preceding, with suitable exhortations."

When this act was published, it gave offence to some of the people, as well as the ministers; and petitions were sent

up, at next meeting, from the congregations of Mid-Calder and Whitburn, craving that the synod would revise and explain it. The defects connected with the Revolution-settlement were considered by the petitioners to be of such a serious nature as to require humiliation rather than thanksgiving; and the appointing of the 5th day of November, to be observed in this exercise, was viewed as giving countenance to the practice (which at that period was peculiarly obnoxious), of observing religious festivals or holidays.

With the view of vindicating themselves, and of removing all scruples from the minds of their people, as to the above appointment, the synod drew up the following explanatory declaration, which appears to have given satisfaction to the complainants:—"Whereas various scruples have been entertained by some people and ministers of this synod, concerning the act of May last year, appointing the 5th of November thereafter, to be observed in solemn thanksgiving, the synod find themselves under a necessity, for their own vindication, and for the satisfaction of those people and members of synod, to declare as follows: First, With respect to the matters of that act, that though it bears the title of an *Act for solemn thanksgiving*, yet in the body of the act it is expressed that our thankfulness ought to be accompanied with lamentation; and, though the grounds of humiliation and thanksgiving are not particularly enumerated, it was not intended by the synod, in their passing of said act, to exclude any matters, whether of humiliation or thanksgiving, that had been specified as such in former acts of synod. The synod could not at that time overtake such a particular enumeration of either of those matters, as they could have wished. It was understood, and again and again declared to be understood and expected, that the several brethren of synod, when they read said act from their pulpits, should make as particular and full enumeration of both these matters, either by reading papers prepared by them for the purpose, or by extempore speeches, as they choosed, according to all the extent of the testimony hitherto maintained by this synod on these subjects. The synod also take this occasion to declare that, under the *Mercies* referred to in the act complained of, they had in their eye the *peace and liberty*, particularly in the enjoyment of their spiritual privileges, with which they have been favoured ever since the Revolution; and which is, in a great measure, owing to the deliverance then wrought for us by the hand of Providence; and considering that they have enjoyed such peace and liberty for so long a period, they judged that it might not be improper to observe a day of thanksgiving, with a special view to the deliverance wrought at the Revolution, and to the manifold mercies

which have been the fruits of it, to the great and good things of the Lord's doing, amidst all the ill things done by us and our fathers.

“Secondly, With reference to the day appointed to be observed in thanksgiving by the act complained of, the synod take this occasion to assure their brethren and friends, that they fixed on the 5th of November for this purpose, without any manner of regard to that day more than to any other day of that year, or of any year since the period referred to in the act. They do, therefore, greatly mistake them, who suppose their appointment, in this single instance, was any symbolizing with the observation of what are called festivals or holidays of human invention. But people's minds being occasionally, without any instrumentality of the synod, awakened to attend to the mercies of the Revolution-deliverance, they judged that it was so far a call in Providence to give them an opportunity to testify their thankfulness for these mercies, in a proper manner; and they were of this opinion, more especially, as it had been a complaint against the synod, that the appointing of days of thanksgiving, on special occasions, had been hitherto much neglected by them.”

## CHAPTER X.

**American affairs**—Jealousy of the brethren in Pennsylvania—Decline submission to the Synod—Propose articles of co-operation—Some brethren demur about sending any more missionaries to them—Committee appointed to consider the present state of affairs—Committee's report sent to Pennsylvania—American brethren required to give an opinion concerning it—Messrs. Bruce and Bunyan dissent—Reasons of dissent by Mr. Bruce—Overture transmitted from the Pennsylvanian presbytery—Declaration of the Synod concerning their connexion with the brethren in America—Dissented from by Messrs. Bruce and Bunyan—Mr. Gib's death—His character—Invitation to Mr. M'Bean from the congregation of Pictou—Appointed by the Synod to go—Refuses to comply—Decision of Synod respecting the pecuniary affairs of congregations—Petition from presbyterians in Upper Canada—Synod's answer—Additions made to the presbytery of Pennsylvania—Application for a preacher to be sent to North Carolina—A preacher appointed to go—Declines the appointment—Messrs. Brown and Ross sent to Nova Scotia—Presbytery of Nova Scotia formed—Rev. Dr. M'Gill of Ayr—Publishes a heretical book—Scoffs at creeds and confessions—Process instituted against him—Convicted of Socinianism—Makes an apology—No censure inflicted on him—People disappointed by the result—Attempt made to revive the process—Complaint made to the presbytery of Ayr—Referred to the General Assembly—Dismissed by the Assembly—Conduct of the Secession Synods in reference to this process.

**AFTER** the termination of the war for independence, which the Americans had successfully waged with the mother country, the brethren belonging to the Pennsylvanian presbytery appear to have become jealous of the jurisdiction claimed and exercised over them by the synod in Scotland. The nature of the connexion existing betwixt them and the synod, gave occasion to their being reproached, by some of their transatlantic neighbours, with being still in subjection to a foreign power. It appears to have been insinuated, by those who were hostile to every kind of connexion with Great Britain, that the ecclesiastical court, to whom they professed allegiance, might interfere with their civil rights as citizens, as well as with their religious privileges as Christians. The idea also had taken possession of their mind, that, as the American provinces were now independent of foreign jurisdiction, so they too might, as a presbytery, aspire to be, if not altogether on a footing of equality with, at least less dependant than they had hitherto been, upon the synod at home.

Influenced by such considerations, they prepared and transmitted to the synod an act on this subject, which was not well relished by many of the brethren at home. This act was

accompanied by a letter explanatory of their reasons for passing it, and craving that the synod would consider what might be the most proper and effectual means for preserving the connexion betwixt the supreme court and the brethren in America ; so that the union might be agreeable to scripture, profitable to both parties, and as little liable as possible to the cavils and exceptions of enemies. They took the liberty, also, of suggesting the following articles, as essentially necessary to the preservation of a real and a profitable union betwixt the synod and the presbytery :—

“ *First*, That we be of one heart and mind, both as to the truth of the gospel, and as to the duty of bearing witness to it, by a public and judicial testimony against the injuries done to it, in the age and place of the world in which our lot is cast. *Second*, That we act consistently with the profession we make, carefully avoiding every thing which might reasonably be considered as an approbation of those who are in course of backsliding, and who are opposing themselves, if not directly to us, yet to our brethren engaged in the same cause with us. *Third*, That whatsoever is a matter of general concern, especially what respects the profession of our faith in one church, be communicated as quickly as possible to the other, that it may be approved of, or objections offered against it, as those to whom it is communicated may see cause. *Fourth*, That no person under censure by one church be received by the other, without such an acknowledgment of his offence, as those among whom the scandal happened would have judged a sufficient evidence of his repentance. *Fifth*, That the strong help the weak, all having respect to the one Lord whom we serve, and bearing one another's burdens, that we thus fulfil the law of Christ.”

There was transmitted, at the same time, a copy of a formula of questions to be put to elders at their ordination, which the presbytery had sanctioned, without any acknowledgment of the authority of the synod. When these documents were received, some of the members expressed their disapprobation of the course which the American brethren were pursuing, and demurred about sending any farther supply to the presbytery. The synod were desirous of preserving, on the one hand, their ecclesiastical authority as a supreme court, and of maintaining, on the other, the connexion which had hitherto existed betwixt them and the presbytery of Pennsylvania ; and a numerous committee was appointed to take the whole affair into consideration, and to prepare an overture on the subject. It was also agreed, that, in consideration of the peculiar circumstances in which the brethren in America were placed, all sympathy should be shown them ; and a recom-

mendation was given to the several presbyteries to deal with ministers, preachers, and students, within their bounds, with a view to the obtaining of additional missionaries.

When the committee on American affairs gave in their report, two different overtures were presented. This gave rise to a long discussion, which terminated in the synod delaying to adopt either of the overtures, and agreeing to transmit a copy of the committee's report to the presbytery of Pennsylvania, that they might know the state of the question before the synod, and that they might be heard before any final decision was adopted; and they were required to transmit, without delay, their opinion to the synod. From this resolution Professor Bruce and Mr. Bunyan dissented; and the following reasons of dissent were afterwards presented by Mr. Bruce, which are here inserted at full length, on account of the good sense and sound constitutional doctrine which they contain.

*"First,* Neither of these overtures, as laid, appeared to meet with the approbation of the court; and there was little probability of any of them being adopted, whatever return might be made from America.

*"Second,* To transmit them in that crude state, when so many objections, apparently of great force, lay against several things contained in them, some of which seem to me to be self-inconsistent, was, in my view, to betray the honour of the synod, and to expose themselves, in the eye of the world and of their brethren at a distance, to such animadversions or censures as these things might justly deserve.

*"Third,* It seems, at any rate, to be altogether out of the regular line of judicative procedure, for a superior and supreme court to refer their own proper business to the cognizance of an inferior, or to regulate or suspend their decisions, upon the event of an express approbation or disapprobation of those who owe subjection to them in the Lord.

*"Fourth,* To do so in the present case, appears to me to be so much the more strange and highly absurd, in regard the brethren, to whose consideration the overtures have been submitted, were actually in the state of parties to the cause, the propriety of their proceedings and conduct being the very matter under the review and judgment of this court; so it is in reality to make them judges in their own cause. And while one or both of the overtures find fault with some part of their proceedings, can any thing be more disorderly and ridiculous than to ask them, upon supposition of their being in a fault, whether they will be pleased to be accounted censurable or blameable by this court?

*"Fifth,* Though I carefully abstain here from touching the merits of the cause yet undecided, and desire cautiously to

avoid, as far as possible, imputing blame to our brethren, for whom I feel the greatest respect and sympathy; yet, from the mode of procedure pursued by that presbytery, with reference to this synod, they could not surely have a claim to expect that it should break through rule, and sacrifice its authority, in order to grant them such indulgence: They having proceeded, at their own hand, to disclaim or explain away their wonted subordination, and to state somewhat new, if not different, terms of fellowship with it, than what had hitherto taken place, without consulting or waiting for the mind of the synod on these interesting subjects. If they adventure to decide on the rights of synod unconsulted and unheard, and to assume to themselves some new controverted, not to say unconstitutional, privileges, in a summary, peremptory, and final manner, there could be no severity nor indelicacy, after that, in this synod asserting their own constitutional privileges, and in proceeding to give judgment in this cause, according to the light they could obtain, and as might appear for edification, without making any such reference.

“*Sixth*, As the acts of that presbytery respecting this cause have been transmitted in the form of decided and finished deeds, an adherence to which is considered by them as the basis of future intercourse, they seem thereby to have precluded this synod from the liberty of transacting with them judicially in any other shape than that proposed by themselves: In which case there may be reason to doubt whether this step of transmitting and referring these overtures, be not so far, *ipso facto*, a tacit compliance with, and sanction to, their plan, and consequently a giving way, at least for a time, to the abolition of their own judicative authority with regard to our brethren and their people in America, and with regard to all missionaries that from time to time may be sent thither.”

These reasons of dissent were entered on the synod's record, and a committee was appointed to answer them; but if any answers were returned, they were not recorded.

At their meeting in May, 1788, the synod resumed the consideration of the affair from the presbytery of Pennsylvania. A letter was read from that presbytery, containing remarks on the papers which had been transmitted to them; and this letter was accompanied by an enactment of their own, which they had prepared on the subject, and which they requested the synod to adopt. After considerable discussion, the business was again referred to a committee, who were required to take all the documents into their serious consideration, and to report before the close of the present meeting. The result of their deliberations was the following overture, which, after being subjected to the necessary corrections and amendments, was

finally adopted, and was ordered to be printed, and copies of it to be sent to the brethren in America :—

“ The synod having taken into consideration an act of the Associate Presbytery of Pennsylvania, dated the 2d of June, 1786, declaring the nature of their connexion with this synod, and also sundry other papers transmitted by that presbytery, relative to the same subject ; And desiring to remove or prevent all misunderstandings which might now or afterwards mar a profitable intercourse between those in this country who are endeavouring to bear witness to the truth of the gospel against the common defection, and those in North America who are disposed to join with them in the same cause ; they declare, That the subordination of the Associate Presbytery of Pennsylvania, to this synod has, from the beginning, been no more than a scriptural union, according to the plan of presbyterial church government : That, being wholly of a spiritual nature, it never did affect any in their civil rights or interests ; and consequently, that there was not the smallest ground for the adversaries of that presbytery to reproach them as subordinate to, and under the control of, a foreign jurisdiction,—as holding the estates, that is the churches they possess, at the will of persons beyond seas : That, in answering applications made to them from that part of the world, this synod has been at no small trouble in sending ministers, and in procuring charitable contributions for defraying the expenses of such missions : That, in what they have done, they have studied a regard to the interests of the kingdom of Christ, neither receiving nor expecting any benefit whatsoever in return, farther than the testimonies of their own consciences bearing witness of their not being unwilling or inactive, when called to labour for promoting the knowledge of Christ in America, and for the assistance of such as there professed a desire of being faithful in his cause : That the wavering and defection of many in that country, who once professed to join with this synod in testifying against such latitudinarian schemes as they now approve, has not discouraged the synod from assisting the remnant who have endeavoured to hold fast the profession of their faith.

“ Wherefore, though the above mentioned act, passed by the Associate Presbytery of Pennsylvania, the 2d of June, 1786, as it related to matters in which the synod was concerned, as well as that presbytery, ought not to have been passed till the synod was consulted, and judgment given by it ; yet considering the peculiar circumstances of that presbytery, the synod, without insisting further on any irregularity which may have been committed in the passing of that act, agree, that the intercourse between this synod and the Asso-

ciate Presbytery of Pennsylvania shall, in time coming, be regulated according to what is expressed in the articles that follow:—

*“First,* That as to what relates to scandals, or causes of a personal and private nature, the synod, from their intercourse with the presbytery, for about thirty-five years past, have no reason to expect that appeals in such causes will be prosecuted; and they judge the prosecution of such appeals would be inexpedient and improper at such a very great distance.

*“Second,* That, in the case of any difference arising in the presbytery of Pennsylvania, about the profession of the faith, or about any truth or duty affecting their connexion with this synod, it is necessary for this synod to know on what side truth and duty lie: The synod, therefore, judge it equitable and necessary that causes of this kind may be brought before them, by reference or appeal.

*“Third,* Though the errors in doctrine, corruptions of the worship of God, and defections from the reformation testimony, prevailing in Britain and America, may be materially the same; yet, as these, in several instances, assume a different appearance, and are promoted under different pretences in the last of these countries, the synod therefore judge it expedient for the presbytery of Pennsylvania to state the profession of their faith, so as that it may always be a direct and proper testimony against the evils by which that part of the Lord's vineyard, in which they labour, is more immediately endangered; provided that presbytery do not give up any truth testified for by this synod, nor enter into any connexion with such as oppose themselves to any part of our Christian and witnessing profession.

*“Fourth,* The formula of questions to be put to ecclesiastical office-bearers, at their ordination in said presbytery of Pennsylvania, ought to contain an engagement to maintain the truth of the gospel against such as oppose it in that part of the world. But the questions in said formula ought to be as near to those put by this synod, in Britain and Ireland, as the state of the church in America will admit; and none of these shall contradict the testimony maintained by this synod: And further, it is requisite that the said formula should maintain an engagement to keep the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace, in contending for the faith and order of the church, as a part of the same witnessing body with this synod.

*“Fifth,* As in making confession of sin, the presbytery of Pennsylvania ought to take particular notice of those offences, backslidings, and transgressions of the laws of God, which are

to be found among themselves, and among the inhabitants of the land where they dwell ; and as they cannot join in the very same confession of sins made by this synod, in acts for humiliation and fasting, and also in public covenanting, by reason of some things in these peculiar to this country : the synod, therefore, judge it expedient for that presbytery to proceed, as the Lord may give them opportunity, to renew their solemn covenant engagements, in a manner agreeable to their circumstances, provided still that the acknowledgment of sin and engagement to duties made by that presbytery, though necessarily different in words, be the same as to the principal matter and design, with the confession and engagement made in solemn covenanting by this synod.

“ *Sixth*, If the presbytery of Pennsylvania shall be found departing from the profession made by them, and acting contrary to these articles, it cannot, in that case, be expected that the synod will countenance them in such a course, by sending ministers to their assistance. The offence must be removed, before the synod can reasonably appoint any of their number to take part with that presbytery : And on sufficient evidence that the said presbytery have gone into a state of apostacy from their former testimony and ordination vows, the synod claim it as competent to them to pass a judicial condemnation of the said presbytery, as no longer a part of the same witnessing body. On the other hand, if the presbytery of Pennsylvania shall find any thing in the proceedings of this synod, which they judge contrary to truth and duty, they shall have the same liberty, as others connected with the synod, to remonstrate, protest, or testify against the same.

“ *Seventh*, If the synod shall be informed as to any member belonging to the presbytery of Pennsylvania, that he acts contrary to his profession and to these articles, they shall transmit an account of this matter to that presbytery, who shall inquire into it, and satisfy the synod as to the accused, by showing either that he is not guilty, or that he has been censured according to the nature of his offence : And, in like manner, if the presbytery of Pennsylvania shall find cause of complaint, as to any of the brethren in this country, they shall inform the presbytery to which the member complained of belongs, who shall judge of that matter according to the ordinary rules of procedure in such cases.

“ *Eighth*, As, by the laws of Christ's house, we are bound to assist one another, as the Lord gives us opportunity ; particularly in the duty of maintaining a testimony against the general and increasing defection of this generation from the truth and cause of our Lord Jesus Christ : This synod, there-

fore, resolve that they will endeavour, as they formerly and of late have done, to answer the requests of the presbytery of Pennsylvania, by appointing and sending ministers or preachers to their assistance, according as there may be need for other labourers in that part of the Lord's vineyard; and for this end, they shall use all proper means to persuade such as may be appointed for that service to undertake it.

"*Ninth*, As the synod shall communicate to the presbytery of Pennsylvania such of their acts as are of general concern, particularly such as respect the profession of the faith made by this synod; so that presbytery shall transmit to the synod all acts of the same nature passed by them: And no new terms of communion shall be enacted by them, till the overtures concerning the same shall have been transmitted to this synod, for their consideration: that by these means unity may be maintained, misunderstandings arising from want of due information prevented, and the most speedy and effectual methods taken to remove any difference which may arise.

"Further, the synod declare, that as, agreeably to this act, the presbytery of Pennsylvania shall have all the aid this synod can afford by sending ministers to their assistance, when they may be wanted, and interposing their authority for this end; so they will endeavour to give speedy judgment in matters of faith which may come before them, by reference or appeal from the above mentioned presbytery, and do every thing in their power for promoting the testimony in North America: The design of those articles being in no instance to hurt them, but help them, and to strengthen their hands in the work of the Lord."

Messrs. Bunyan and Bruce craved that their dissent from the above overture might be marked, and reserved to themselves the liberty of bringing forward their reasons of dissent (should they see cause), at a future meeting.

During the course of these proceedings, Mr. Adam Gib, minister at Edinburgh, paid the debt of nature;\* and by his death, that branch of the Secession Church, whose proceedings are recorded in this part of the narrative, was deprived of an active and most efficient member. While a student at the University of Edinburgh, he was in the habit of attending the meetings of the General Assembly, and was so disgusted with their arbitrary proceedings, that he had formed the resolution, even before the Secession commenced, of disclaiming all connexion with the judicatories of the Established Church. When the synod of Perth and Stirling, in October 1735, ordered the intruder to be enrolled in the parish of Muckhart, to which Mr.

\* Mr. Gib died on the 18th of June, 1788.

Gib belonged, he presented to the synod a formal declaration of secession from the Establishment; and, in the month of December the same year, he appeared, along with other commissioners from Muckhart, at the meeting of the Associate Presbytery, and laid upon their table the first declaration of adherence which they had yet received. He became a member of the Presbytery in April 1741, when he was ordained minister of the Associate congregation of Edinburgh. From that period till his death, he bore a prominent part in almost all the transactions in which the Secession Church was concerned. When Mr. Alexander Moncrieff of Abernethy died, the synod were desirous that he should succeed him as Theological Professor; but he declined accepting of the charge. His writings furnish abundant evidence of his strong polemical tendencies. Not a few of the productions he has left behind, owed their origin to the controversies in which he was engaged. In his controversial pamphlets, he displays, for the most part, a clear and masculine understanding, combined with considerable warmth of temper, and occasionally an undue asperity of language. According to the views which he entertained, he laboured strenuously to uphold and vindicate the cause of his Master against all assailants; and if he sometimes erred in his mode of doing so, he is entitled to respect for the fidelity and boldness with which, as a minister of the gospel, he defended the faith against what he deemed the prevailing heresies and corruptions of the times. His name also deserves an honourable place in this record, on account of his early and devoted attachment to the cause of the Secession, and on account of the unwearied efforts which he made, during a long life, to promote its success.

When the General Associate Synod met in May, 1789, an urgent application was addressed to them, from the session and congregation of Pictou in Nova Scotia, craving that Mr. Æneas M'Bean, a Gaelic preacher, might be sent out to them, to take part in the ministry along with Mr. M'Gregor; and in support of their application, they urged the destitute condition of the Highlanders, who had emigrated to that part of the globe. This communication was accompanied by a letter from Mr. M'Gregor, enforcing the request of the people. The synod deeply sympathized in their situation, and were disposed to grant them all the assistance in their power; but Mr. M'Bean's services were much needed amongst the Highlanders in the north of Scotland. The Secession congregation in Inverness were desirous to obtain him for their minister; and the presbytery of Elgin represented the great necessity there was for his labours being continued amongst the Gaelic population in that part of the country. The synod felt the force of

these representations, and they delayed, till next meeting, giving any decision in the matter. In the mean time, they authorized the presbytery of Elgin to ordain Mr. M'Bean at large, with a view to his being settled either at Inverness, or sent to Nova Scotia, as they might afterwards decide; and they appointed a letter to be written to Mr. M'Gregor and the people of Pictou, stating the destitute situation of the inhabitants of the North of Scotland, as the reason of the delay. They also renewed their former resolution to encourage Gaelic students in the prosecution of their studies, by giving them assistance (should it be required), out of their fund, and they recommended it to the presbyteries and provincial synods to have particular respect to the education of such students.

At their next meeting, in the spring of the following year (1790), the same parties again appeared before the synod, urging their respective claims to the services of Mr. M'Bean; and notwithstanding the strong case made out, on behalf of the Highlanders at home, the synod showed the deep interest which they felt in the spiritual welfare of their countrymen abroad, by giving their decision in favour of the congregation of Pictou. Mr. M'Bean, however, stated some difficulties about undertaking the mission, and a committee was appointed to converse with him. After some time they reported, that they had been unsuccessful in removing his objections; and the presbytery of Glasgow, who acted on behalf of the people of Pictou, not considering it expedient to insist on his fulfilling the synod's appointment, he was afterwards settled at Inverness.

A dispute having arisen in the congregation of Edinburgh (now vacant by the death of Mr. Gib), "concerning the trust and management of the money arising from seat-rents, and the accountableness of the seat-letters and treasurer to the session,"—a representation and petition from the session brought the matter before the presbytery, who referred it for decision to the supreme court. The subject was fully discussed by the synod, and after all parties had been heard, the following judgment was given:—"That though this synod are not to be considered as entertaining any doubt, that all the affairs of any congregation, considered as a religious society, are of right under the management of the session of said congregation: yet they advise the elders of the congregation of Edinburgh to exercise their power in such a manner as may be most agreeable to the members of their congregation, so as that all affairs may be managed to the satisfaction of the whole; And considering the animosities and confusions subsisting in said congregation, they further advise, that the session call a

meeting of the congregation of Edinburgh to choose a treasurer, and seat-letters; the treasurer and seat-letters who shall be chosen in said meeting being always subject to the direction and review of the session." In the month of August, the same year (1790), the presbytery of Edinburgh gave a decision, "determining that such a standing committee" (as had obtained for some time past in the congregation of Edinburgh), "with pretended powers from the congregation to manage the affairs of it, independent of the session, is irregular and disorderly, and should from this time be discontinued." Against this decision a protest and appeal were taken to the ensuing meeting of synod. The synod, without a vote, dismissed the protest as groundless and unreasonable, and affirmed the sentence of the presbytery of Edinburgh. At a subsequent meeting of synod, a remonstrance and petition were presented against this deed, but the synod adhered to their decision.\*

A representation was laid before the synod, at this meeting, on behalf of the "Presbyterian inhabitants of Upper Canada, called loyalists, in the districts of Kingston, and New Cornwall, in the province of Quebec," stating that they were destitute of all means of religious instruction, having neither ministers nor Bibles, nor catechisms; and that living in such a remote quarter of the globe, they had no opportunity of procuring books, even though they had money wherewith to purchase them; surrounded, as they were, by heathens and Roman Catholics, they expressed their fears lest their children should grow up in ignorance, and lest they themselves should be seduced into popery, or sink into a state of heathenism; and they craved assistance from the synod, to enable them to procure a supply of religious books, and of catechisms for their children. In answer to this application, the synod appointed a committee to correspond on the subject with Mr. Moncrieff, treasurer to the Society for promoting Christian Knowledge among the poor; and the information thus obtained was to be transmitted to the provincial synods, that such relief might be granted as they should judge expedient.

By the persevering efforts of the synod, in sending out brethren to America, the presbytery of Pennsylvania had nearly recovered its former strength. The union, which had taken

\* Of late years several instances have occurred, in Secession congregations, of managers requiring sessions to account to them for all the money collected at the church doors, from the voluntary offerings of the people. This is quite contrary to presbyterian order, and is at variance with the sound decision given by the General Associate Synod in the above case. The session according to the presbyterian order, are the only constitutional overseers of a congregation, "considered as a religious society, and all its affairs are of right under their management."

place betwixt the greater portion of its members and the brethren of the Reformed Presbytery, in 1782, had almost annihilated it. We have already seen that Messrs. William Marshall and James Clarkson were the only clerical members who remained faithful to the testimony. Little more than a year elapsed, when their hands were strengthened by the mission of Mr. Thomas Beveridge; and in the month of October, 1788, they received a fresh reinforcement, by the names of Messrs. David Goodwillie and John Anderson being added to their roll. Soon after this, Mr. Matthew Henderson, one of their original number, made a confession of his sin "in departing from his former profession;" and having declared himself a true penitent, was permitted again to take his seat amongst them. Mr. David Somerville, minister at Strathaven, having resigned his charge of that congregation in August, 1790, set sail for America, and connected himself with the brethren of Pennsylvania; and, in the following year, another addition was made to their number by Mr. John Cree, one of the preachers whom the synod had sent out, being ordained at New York. On the day of his ordination, the presbytery engaged in the work of covenanting.

While the synod were thus fostering, with parental fondness, the presbytery of Pennsylvania, they were earnestly requested to send out a labourer to another district of America. A number of people belonging to the county of Mecklenburgh, in North Carolina, had formerly made application for a minister to be sent; and they had remitted a sum of money to assist in defraying the expense of the mission. They again renewed their call, and craved that the money might be employed on behalf of any brother whom the synod might be pleased to send. An application was, at the same time, made for a labourer to be sent out to Amherst in Nova Scotia. Both of these petitions were favourably received; but the synod found themselves much fettered in answering them, by the difficulty which they had of procuring persons who were willing to undertake these missions. There was ample employment for their preachers at home. The demands made for their services were, indeed, more numerous than they could well supply. Still they considered it their duty to send the gospel to those who were destitute of it abroad, and they made every exertion for this purpose. With a view to encourage their preachers to undertake the transatlantic missions, they agreed, that if any who went on these missions should find, after a trial of a few years, that they could not remain, they should be at liberty to return, and the synod pledged themselves to defray the expenses of their journey homeward.

Mr. Thomas Smith was appointed to go to North Carolina,

and the presbytery of Glasgow was authorized to take the necessary steps with a view to his ordination. But Mr. Smith positively refused to submit to the appointment; so that the hopes which the people of Mecklenburgh county had fondly cherished, of obtaining a minister, were for a season frustrated. After some delay, two young men who were students of divinity, Messrs. John Brown and Duncan Ross, expressed their willingness to go on a mission to Nova Scotia. The synod eagerly availed themselves of their offer, amid so many disappointments, which they had lately experienced, and they enjoined, that after having completed their course of study, the provincial synod of Perth should take the charge of getting them licensed and ordained, and sent off, without delay, to the place of destination. They also appointed a collection to be made, throughout the several congregations, to defray the expense of the mission; they further ordained, that so soon as one or more ministers should arrive in the country, besides Mr. M'Gregor, they should constitute themselves into a presbytery, under the designation of the Associate Presbytery of Nova Scotia. Some time after this, the synod were gratified by receiving intelligence, that these young men had reached the scene of their labours, and that they had, in obedience to the injunction of the synod, constituted themselves, along with Mr. M'Gregor, into a presbytery.\*

At this period, considerable attention was excited, especially in the West of Scotland, by a process carried on against one of the ministers of the National Church, for heresy. The result of the process produced an impression exceedingly unfavourable to the interests of the Establishment, because it afforded decisive proof that many of the ministers of that church were the abettors of Socinian, as well as of Arminian doctrine. It tended also to strengthen the grounds of the Secession, and showed how necessary her existence was to the maintenance of pure and undefiled religion in the country. In this case the church courts of the Secession deemed it necessary to warn the people against the dangerous errors that were so openly propagated; and the publications, that were issued both by synods and by ministers belonging to the Secession, were well-calculated to serve the cause of truth, by giving a faithful exposure of the unscriptural nature of the tenets that were published.

The person against whom this process was instituted, was Dr. William M'Gill, one of the ministers of the Established Church in Ayr. In 1786, he published a book, entitled a *Practical Essay on the Death of Jesus Christ*, in which he

\* The Associate Presbytery of Nova Scotia was formed on the 7th of July, 1793.

taught, in the most undisguised and offensive manner, sentiments totally at variance with the scriptures, and with the standards of his own church. He taught that Christ was a person of our own order, and that, although he was invested with an extraordinary office, and endued with extraordinary powers, yet he was not God equal with the Father. He endeavoured to explain away the doctrine of the atonement, by affirming that Christ did not die as the substitute of sinners; that his priesthood and sacrifice were merely figurative; that his errand into the world was not to purchase salvation for men, but to make a clear and distinct revelation of the rule of our obedience, to exemplify it in his holy life, and to assure sinners of their obtaining pardon upon their repentance, and of their being accepted upon their sincere obedience. He inculcated on this point, "that next to the mercy of God, which is never to be forgotten, the benefits of our redemption by Christ, flow chiefly from the righteousness and holiness of his life; and particularly from the eminent patience, piety, submission, and benevolence displayed at the close of it, which avail with God, in favour of sinners, in the same manner as do the piety and virtue of good men in general; only the effects of such singular excellencies are proportionably greater and more extensive." He further affirmed, that the intercession of Christ with the Father is prevalent, in the same way that the prayers of the saints are prevalent in behalf of others. On this point, he declared, "that as Jesus prayed both for his friends and his enemies, while he was on earth, so he is now in heaven, a High Priest, who appears in the presence of God for us; not merely, we may believe, in the general sense of governing his church, and superintending all the affairs of our salvation, but also by employing his power and favour with the Almighty Parent of the universe, for the acceptance of our imperfect prayers and services, and more particularly for procuring peace and repentance, amidst our manifold provocations, and the pardon of our sins, when we truly forsake them." "Our Lord's intercession" (he added) "may avail to procure a respite for sinners, and further means of repentance, till all proper methods be tried for their conversion; and such benefits may be granted to them, partly out of respect to the worthiness and excellence of his character, and that heroic virtue displayed by him in his death; and, on the same account, the pardon of their sins, upon repentance. But neither his intercession nor merits were ever intended to procure pardon to obstinate and final impenitence." He was loud in his praises of human merit, and inculcated the popish doctrine of supererogation, declaring "that sinful men have often received very valuable benefits, which they had no title

to on their account, not only through the instrumentality, but on account of the virtue of others." He affirmed that God "makes even the imperfect virtue which is to be found among men, a source of blessedness, not to its immediate owners only, but to others also, who are estranged from it. The happiness of its votaries he increases, by suffering their piety to overflow, to the good of all with whom they are connected, or for whom they interest themselves." "God is pleased to accept it at their hands, both on their own behalf, and in some sort too, as the price of benefits bestowed upon the undeserving." Finally, he represented the Holy Ghost, in several places of his book, as the power of God, and not as a divine person.

It certainly gives an unfavourable view of the orthodoxy of the ministers connected with the Church of Scotland, at that period, that a book containing such heretical sentiments, should have been permitted to circulate extensively in various parts of the country, for at least two or three years, without any judicial cognizance having been taken of its author, either by the presbytery or synod, of which he was a member, or by the General Assembly of the National Church. No movement was made by any of the church courts, in this matter, until the reverend author, emboldened by the impunity which he had experienced, made an open attack upon creeds and confessions. The attack was made by him, in an appendix to a sermon which he preached (in commemoration of the Revolution), upon the 5th of November, 1788, and which was soon after published. In this appendix, he attacked one of his brethren in the presbytery; vilified the Seceders; treated with contempt all his opponents, and declaimed against the bondage of not being permitted to give his own heretical interpretation of the language of scripture, unfettered by creeds. "There was a period of the Christian church," he said, "when they were thought worthy of censure, who would not consent to wholesome words, even the words of the Lord Jesus Christ. But now we are liable to very severe censure, if we do not set aside these wholesome divine words, and substitute in their room the commandments of men; yea, submit to the dictates of every reverend upstart creed-maker, who has presumption not only to impose on us his own sense of the scripture, and of the Confession of Faith, but to set up their unscriptural phrases as the objects of our reverence and worship." "The gravest author, it is humbly conceived, may, without impiety, and without giving just ground of offence to any Christian, deride the vain and impotent attempts of human wisdom, or rather of human ignorance and pride, to express the articles of our faith in fitter words than the Holy Spirit has done."

At the meeting of synod of Glasgow and Ayr, in April 1789, a complaint was made concerning the heretical publications of this individual; and it was overtured that the synod would take the matter into their serious consideration, and order inquiry to be made concerning the grounds of the complaint. The synod ordered the presbytery of Ayr, as the radical court, to make the necessary inquiry, and to report at next meeting of synod. Against this sentence a protest was taken, and an appeal made, to the ensuing General Assembly, on the ground that such a sentence encroached on the independent rights of the presbytery of Ayr, as the radical court.

When the General Assembly met in the month of May, the same year, the sentence of the synod was reversed; but the reversal was coupled with a recommendation to the presbytery of Ayr, to take such steps in the matter as they might find necessary for preserving the purity of the doctrines of the church, and the authority of her standards. The presbytery, acting upon the recommendation of the Assembly, appointed a committee of inquiry, to examine and report concerning the heresies which the doctor's writings were alleged to contain. In the report which this committee presented, the doctor was charged with having inculcated, in his publications, erroneous notions on the following points:—The original and essential dignity of the Son of God; the doctrine of atonement by his sufferings and death; the priesthood and intercession of Christ; the method of reconciling sinners to God; and subscription to the Confession of Faith. To the charges in each of these articles, Dr. M'Gill was required to give answers. After a variety of dissents and protests were taken, for the purpose of impeding the progress of the investigation before the presbytery, the whole business was referred to the consideration of the synod, which met at Ayr, on the 18th of April, 1790.

The following account of the proceedings which took place, in this process, before the synod of Glasgow and Ayr, is interesting; it shows the pitiable manœuvring that was adopted to shield a notorious and avowed heretic from merited censure. The account is extracted from a document published under the sanction of the provincial Associate Synod of Glasgow, and which was drawn up by a person of great honesty and integrity, who had good opportunities of being correctly informed concerning the particulars which he describes, many of them being witnessed by himself.

“It is confidently reported, that when the supposed friends of this prosecution came to Ayr, and had some private meeting together, some proposed one thing, some another, but

could not agree in any thing. Some proposed, upon reading the first article of the report of the committee, they should approve of it as founding a charge of heresy, and refer Dr. M'Gill to the Assembly, to be censured as they should see proper; or to be formally libelled by them, if he did not give reasonable satisfaction. Others thought that the synod should approve of the committee's report, after what amendments or corrections might seem necessary, and refer to the Assembly to determine what degree of censure should be inflicted upon him for his errors. Another party, who had their measures already planned more secretly, did not as yet particularly communicate their sentiments to their brethren, but alleged that their friends in the east country had altered their mind, though it is said that some of themselves have since owned that they were misinformed.

"When the synod met in the evening of the 13th of April, a very long time was spent in reasoning about the plan of their procedure, as whether it was regular to transmit Dr. M'Gill's publications, along with other papers from the presbytery; and in what order they should begin the cause, whether with Dr. M'Gill's protest against the presbytery, for referring the cause to the synod, or with the reference from the presbytery. After the reading of Dr. M'Gill's general answers to the report, with the papers from the presbytery upon the cause, to be under consideration, there was a great deal of desultory reasoning; but whenever any of the speakers came to touch upon the principal object of their consideration, or the merits of the cause, they were interrupted by Dr. M'Gill, or some of his friends.

"At this time also, proposals were made by some members to appoint a committee to converse with the doctor, and so to bring about a settlement of the affair, if possible; but this was opposed by others, who alleged that they could give no proper instructions to a committee, till all papers were first read. Nor was the doctor as yet giving any evidence of his desiring such a thing, while he asserted that if he was obliged to give more particular answers, he apprehended they would not be so satisfactory. It was now alleged that they had been all along out of order, and that, instead of entering on the reference from the presbytery, they should first begin with Dr. M'Gill's protest and appeal, which was at last agreed to.

"The presbytery's answers contained, so far as we recollect, very proper and temperate replies to the doctor's futile and bitter reasons of appeal. But, as it was now about midnight, a motion for adjourning was made, and agreed to; so that the parties were not heard in speeches at the bar. We are credibly informed that this was a busy time between Dr.

M'Gill's friends and the popular clergy, from about Glasgow. As the doctor's friends saw that the other party were powerful at this time, they insisted with him that something like concessions should be made, by which they might either be satisfied, or broken into parties.

"When some of the two parties first met together in private, by a curious manœuvre, they looked very strange and stately together. The orthodox gentlemen talked high of deposition if the doctor did not prevent it by confession of his errors, though in a little they came down from their height to more moderate terms. As they had given no satisfactory account to their former friends of the presbytery of Ayr, about the plan of their intended operations, but had even declined it, with some marks of levity and scorn, when it was asked by one of them, on the evening of the thirteenth, we may believe that a great many members of synod had not the least apprehension of the curious turn which the affair took on the following day, till the scheme of appointing a committee to converse with the doctor was proposed. Indeed, we have been told that one of the members of the presbytery of Ayr went early, on the morning of the fourteenth, to the lodgings of one of the Glasgow gentlemen, and peremptorily insisted upon knowing what method they intended to pursue in bringing the cause to an issue; and that, after discovering some shuffling and levity, as on the preceding evening, he told him in general their plan of conducting the business: whereupon the member of Ayr presbytery began to express particular indignation and dissatisfaction at such unfaithful and treacherous conduct. The other gentleman seemed to be little moved, and told him, that if he and his friends in Ayr presbytery saw meet to concur with him, they might do so; if not, they had sufficient strength to carry their measures without them.

"When the synod met on Wednesday morning, before even the ordinary formality of calling parties was observed (so far as we can recollect), and what was still more material, without reading the report of the committee, a friend of the doctor's instantly rose up, and intimated to the synod that Dr. M'Gill was now disposed to make some concessions or acknowledgments for the sake of peace. The substance of what was read, or moved to the synod by this gentleman, was to the following purpose, so far as we can recollect:—That, though Dr. M'Gill, in his practical Essay, sincerely meant to promote the ends of truth and peace, yet now, upon farther reflection, he is disposed to acknowledge, that there are in his publications ideas which *appear* improper; and expressions, or modes of expressions, ambiguous and unguarded. He moved that a committee should be appointed to converse with the

doctor, and to draw up what might appear calculated to bring the affair to a desirable issue. When this gentleman made his overture he did not mention in what matters the doctor was disposed to own he had used ambiguous expressions, or improper ideas; but we are almost certain, that his language was more determinate than that contained in the Apology, presented to, and accepted by, the synod; for he did not say that the doctor was only disposed to grant that there were ideas which may appear improper. Immediately after this, the doctor signified his desire that this affair should be some way accommodated. The above-mentioned motion was seconded by others.

“ At this time, the synod openly avowed themselves of two opposite parties, as directly as is done in the House of Commons. Accordingly, they appointed three of the supposed friends of the doctor, and also three of the reputed orthodox from the northern boundaries of the synod, as a committee. Dr. M'Gill now withdrew his protest against the presbytery, with his paper, entitled *General Answers*, and retired with the committee. It was now suspected by the discerning spectators, that this famous prosecution was to end in some pitiful farce, which soon came to be fully verified.

“ When the committee returned to the synod, about two hours after their removal, the result of their deliberations was announced by two orthodox gentlemen, who were honoured to declare the glad tidings of the doctor's complying disposition. A popular preacher from Glasgow, who has had his hand very deep in this disgraceful business, and who has even got the thanks of one of the chief of Dr. M'Gill's defenders at the bar of the last General Assembly, for his distinguished and exemplary moderation in this cause, had the honour of reading the doctor's introduction to his famous recantation of Socinian heresy. This gentleman was so full of his subject, that he entertained the synod with a flowing speech, about the doctor's good behaviour before the committee, and his strong hopes of the acknowledgments being highly satisfactory to the synod. Immediately after him rose a doctor to read the succeeding part of the Apology. He also prefaced his part of the business with a speech of the same sort with that which went before, and endeavoured to raise the expectations of the court still higher, concerning the satisfactory nature of these acknowledgments. He had no sooner ended this task, than a number of voices were raised from different corners of the council-house, crying, *Agree, Agree*.

“ The business proceeded for a little in this manner, till a member of the presbytery of Ayr moved that they who had a particular concern in this matter should be called, or at least

have an opportunity of declaring their sentiments on the subject. Whereupon an old serious gentleman declared, that he did not consider these acknowledgments as adequate to the offence which had been given. Another expressed his surprise that the synod should seem disposed to hurry over a business of such vast importance to the cause of truth and peace ; and declared that he hoped he would have the fortitude to enter his dissent, and give his reasons for it, should he not have another to second him in the whole synod. There was not another minister nor elder, who came so far as to offer a dissent ; and even he was persuaded by his brethren to abandon his design, we believe partly from an apprehension that he was supposed to have some personal animosity against the doctor in the prosecution of this business. But, if he was conscious of the contrary, he lost a noble opportunity of distinguishing himself in the cause of truth.

“ Another gentleman, of the presbytery of Ayr, would not agree to the overture being turned into an act unless some method was fallen upon to prevent the republication of the doctor's book, in its present state, which would create new disturbances. Some alleged, in case of its being republished, it should be accompanied with his concessions and acknowledgments : others alleged this would infringe upon the liberty of the press. Then it came to be asserted, that the author would expose himself to a new prosecution, should he publish his book in its present state. Upon hearing these things, the gentleman said, that he would not attempt to divide the house ; but he could not agree that the synod should call this *an unanimous decision*. So that he and the member who proposed to dissent, were the only persons who prevented the synod from having a complete triumph : as the worthy old gentleman, formerly mentioned, gave them no more opposition, than his simple declaration, that, in his opinion, the acknowledgment was not adequate to the offence given by the author of the publications referred to.” \*

It was agreed, that along with the doctor's apology and explanation, there should be published certain passages of the Confession of Faith, relative to the person and atonement of Jesus Christ. This celebrated apology was to the following effect :—“ I am extremely sorry that what was honestly intended by me to serve the interests of piety, charity, and peace, should have given ground of offence to my Christian brethren. My essay on the death of Jesus Christ was designed to be wholly practical. My sole object was to pro-

\* Overture concerning Dr. M'Gill's errors and process, containing a warning against said errors, and the sinful proceedings of the courts in that process ; prepared by the Rev. James Robertson, in Kilmarnock, &c. pp. 20—25.

mote practical godliness, founded on the facts and circumstances of the gospel history ; and upon this design I was so intent, that I may, in some instances, have omitted things which I hold to be true, when the great practical use of them did not occur to me. In every work of man, more especially of some length and variety, it is not to be expected but there will be failures and blemishes which may have crept into it ; at which, however, men of judgment and candour will not be offended, when they are convinced that the design upon the whole is good." He then went over the five articles charged against him as erroneous, and gave explanations of the views which, he said, he meant to have inculcated. These explanations, though differently expressed, did not vary materially, in their meaning, from the original statements, which they were designed to explain. He concluded his apology in the following manner :—" Upon the whole, I assert, as I have formerly done more than once, that far from being inimical in any respect, I am a zealous, though weak, friend to the constitution and authority of the Church of Scotland, in doctrine, discipline, and worship, and do cordially condemn whatever appears inconsistent therewith. And considering that every minister of the Church of Scotland is bound, by very solemn engagements, to adhere to her standards, as the only authoritative interpreters of the sacred scriptures among us, I hereby again declare, that I am sorry that my publications should have given offence to any of my brethren, or to the world. And now, upon further reflection, I am sensible, that there are *ideas*, contained in these publications, which *may appear* improper, and *modes of expression ambiguous and unguarded* ; particularly respecting the original and essential dignity of the Son of God, the doctrine of atonement by his sufferings and death, the priesthood and intercession of Christ, the method of reconciling sinners to God, and subscription to the Confession of Faith ; *all which ideas I hereby disclaim, and for all such expressions I am heartily sorry* ; and hereby declare my belief of these great articles, as they are laid down in the standards of this church. I therefore entreat the reverend synod to receive this my apology, which I leave with them, and submit it to their determination, to publish these my explanations and apology to the world, if they shall think it necessary."\*

This apology is artfully worded. There is no acknowledgment in it, on the part of the author, that he had taught pernicious errors ; and there is no explicit declaration, that he had renounced those erroneous notions of divine truth, to which

\* A distinct and impartial account of the process for Socinian heresy against William M'Gill, D.D. p. 8, &c.

he had given publicity in his writings. All that he admits, is, that his publications contained ideas which *might appear* improper, and *modes of expression* which were ambiguous and unguarded. These ideas he disclaims; and for these modes of expression he is sorry. He further declares his belief "of these great articles,"—to which his apology refers,—as they are laid down in the standards of the church. This he had always done. But this declaration goes for nothing, when it is remembered that the explanations which he had given "of these great articles" were not in accordance with the views held by sound divines.

The synod were glad to get quit of a business, which, on account of the excited state of public feeling, they found it difficult to manage. No one proposed to bring the pannel to an explicit acknowledgment of his pernicious errors. No one moved, that he should have even the lowest degree of censure inflicted on him,—or that he should be warned against publishing such doctrines, for the future, either from the pulpit or the press. On the contrary, they recorded the high satisfaction which his apology had given them; and agreed to give God thanks on account of it. The following is the deliverance which they gave upon the subject: "The synod having read and considered the above explanations and apology, did, without a vote, approve of them, and receive the same as satisfactory; ordered them to be published by their clerk, and, along with them, the section of the Confession of Faith respecting the original and essential dignity of the Son of God, and also that section of the Confession which respects the atonement. Upon which Dr. M'Gill declared his acquiescence in said sentence, and took instruments in the clerk's hands. The synod, impressed with a deep sense of that harmony and concord with which this matter has been settled, and convinced that what they have done, will, under the blessing of God, tend to promote peace and truth in this church, thought proper to appoint, and did appoint, a reverend member to give thanks unto God for the countenance and direction he had given them in this matter."

In accordance with the latter part of this decision, first one minister, and then another, belonging to what was supposed to be the orthodox side of the house, was requested to offer up thanksgiving, on behalf of the synod, for this memorable vindication of the truth, which they had been enabled to make. But whether from a feeling of modesty, or a sense of shame, both of the ministers declined; and a suitable termination was put to this affair, by Dr. M'Gill's colleague (Dalrymple), whose sentiments were known to be nearly akin to those of his fel-

low-labourer, acting as the high priest of the synod on this occasion.\*

However satisfactory this decision was to the synod, it did not give the same satisfaction to the people. Many of them indeed rejoiced on account of it: but a general feeling of disgust was produced by the conduct of the synod; and the more serious portion of the community, belonging to the Established Church, felt that the cause of truth had been betrayed by those in whom they had placed confidence. After recovering from the consternation into which they had been thrown, by the unexpected decision, a correspondence was commenced amongst individuals residing in different parts of the country, with a view to revive the process, and, if possible, to bring it to a more satisfactory issue. Accordingly, in the month of January, the following year, a formal complaint and libel against Dr. M'Gill was presented to the presbytery of Ayr. The presbytery refused to receive it on the ground of some informality. From the presbytery it was carried by appeal to the synod. The synod, without giving any opinion on the merits of the appeal, lectured the people on the necessity of prudence and caution, in instituting processes against ministers; and sent the cause back to the presbytery, with instructions to proceed in it according to the rules of the church. The presbytery, "on account of the magnitude of the cause, and on account of the many difficulties attending it," would not take upon themselves the responsibility of giving judgment in the matter,—but remitted the consideration of it *simpliciter* to the General Assembly. When the Assembly met, without giving themselves any trouble to investigate the merits of the case, they declared that the complainers had no particular right or interest in the affair, to become libellers of Dr. M'Gill,—because they were not of his parish; they declared further, that the cause had been already determined. And on these grounds, they dismissed the complaint as groundless and unreasonable.

These proceedings of the Established Church courts, in throwing the shield of their protection over an individual who had been guilty of propagating the most dangerous errors, were not permitted to pass without a testimony being lifted up against them by the Secession Church. Their conduct was severely scrutinized and indignantly exposed in pamphlets penned by Seceding ministers. The Burgher Associate Synod (as we shall afterwards see) published a "Warning against Socinianism," in which they pointed out the unscrip-

\* Overture concerning Dr. M'Gill's errors and process, &c. p. 26.

tural and dangerous nature of the tenets which Dr. M'Gill had so boldly advanced in his "Practical Essay." An overture, having the same object in view, was also introduced into the provincial Associate Synod of Glasgow; and after being carefully revised by a committee, it was published, by appointment of synod, under the title of, *An overture concerning Dr. M'Gill's errors and process, containing a warning against said errors, and the sinful proceedings of the courts in that process.* This overture contains a historical detail of the proceedings connected with the process; an exposure of the errors contained in Dr. M'Gill's publications; a condemnation of the conduct pursued by the judicatories of the National Church, in tolerating such errors; and a solemn confession of those gospel truths which had been brought into question by the proceedings that had taken place.

It is now upwards of forty years since this overture was published, under the sanction of the provincial synod of Glasgow; and there are passages to be found in it, which, though they had been penned in the spirit of prophecy, with a view to the Voluntary Church question of the present day, could not have been more appropriate. They show us that the doctrine of civil establishments in religion was not much more in repute half a century ago, in at least one section of the Secession, than it is now; and the charge brought against the present race of Seceders, that the sentiments entertained by a large portion of them, unfavourable to civil establishments, *are new*, is unfounded. In this publication we find such anti-establishment declarations as the following:—"The ministers of the National Church are not only divided about ecclesiastical management, and other questions of more doubtful disputation, but about the most fundamental articles of the revealed religion. Now, our Lord Jesus Christ has declared, that a house or kingdom divided against itself cannot stand; and, in fact, there is properly no bond of union among them, except the civil establishment. Were this *old rusty hoop* knocked off, they would fly into ten or twenty pieces."\* Again; "It is more than time that the people in this country were falling upon more resolute and regular methods of having this anti-christian yoke (patronage) dashed in pieces. They should resolve to let every intruder instruct his proper audience, the pews, walls, bells, and steeples, with his honourable or right honourable patron; and they should persist in an orderly and peaceable, but firm and determined, application to parliament every year, till they get either this legal and oppressive tyranny abolished, or the public funds applied for the support

of one in each parish, to whose ministrations they can with a safe conscience submit, in proportion to their real numbers ; or, what is perhaps *the only effectual way* of being quit of this cruel usurpation, *let the public fund be applied to other useful purposes, and let every one pay his own minister, as he does his lawyer or physician.*"\* These statements are sufficiently plain ; and whatever opinion my readers may be inclined to form of them, they at least establish the fact, that Voluntary Church sentiments in the Secession are not new.

The General Associate synod did not make any public declaration of their sentiments, in reference to the above process ; but adverted to it repeatedly in clauses introduced into their acts for public fasting ; and their language was that of deep lamentation, that the judicatories of the National Church should, by their lenient measures, have given encouragement to the propagation of such dangerous errors. " Our call," they said, " is loud, to be humbled for the sins of the land in which we live. An awful flood of error hath broken in upon the land, and is threatening to overflow it. It is become fashionable with many, especially of the higher ranks, to reject and treat with contempt the whole of revealed religion. Many who profess to believe the divinity of the Christian religion, openly reject its most important articles. The divinity of our Saviour, his suretiship for the elect, and the real and proper atonement made by him ; original sin, both imputed and inherent, the divinity of the Spirit, and the necessity of his power and grace for our regeneration and sanctification, are openly denied by many ; and the opposite doctrines have of late been published from the pulpit and press by some, yet ministers in the Established Church. Arminianism is become the too fashionable doctrine of the day. The gospel is converted into a new law, adapted to the state of fallen men, requiring repentance and sincere obedience as the condition of pardon and eternal life ; while that precious doctrine of the gospel, justification by free grace through imputed righteousness, is rejected as unreasonable and degrading to the dignity and ability of man."

\* P. 94.

## CHAPTER XI.

Political excitement—Seceders and others subscribe a declaration of loyalty—Regarded by some as ensnaring—Complaint made to the Synod concerning it—Advice of Synod—Insinuations thrown out against the loyalty of Seceders—Subject brought before the Synod—Committee appointed to prepare a vindication—Political essays by Mr. Young of Hawick—Their character—Popular with those in power—Pension offered to him—Pension refused—Complaint made to the Synod concerning Mr. Young's essays—Committee appointed to examine them—Mr. James Watt, probationer—Writes an objectionable pamphlet—Subject to discipline—Dealings with him—Renounces his connexion with Synod—Deprived of licence, and excommunicated—Scruples concerning the power of the magistrate in religious matters—Case of Messrs. Thomas M'Crie and William M'Ewan—Declaratory act of the Synod on this point—Mr. Bruce prepares a statement of principles respecting civil government—Statement not adopted—Missionary societies—Objected to by some—Discussions in the Synod concerning them—Overture disapproving of them—Adopted by Synod—Protest by Mr. Ferrier and others—Remarks on the overture—Remonstrances and petitions against the act—Act reviewed—Explanatory statements concerning it—Case of casuistry from Ireland—Deliverance of Synod concerning it—Mission to Kentucky—Introduction of the Secession into Orkney—Makes rapid progress—Happy effects of it—Rev. William Broadfoot ordained in Kirkwall—Affecting incident—Representation concerning lay-preaching and Sabbath schools—Decision of the Synod concerning them—Complaint against decision—Decision reviewed—And amended—Dissent by Mr. Muckersie and others—Letters from the missionaries in Kentucky—Presbytery of Kentucky formed.

THE period which immediately followed the breaking out of the French Revolution was one of strong political excitement. That event produced a great moral convulsion amongst the nations of Europe. Like the heavings of a mighty earthquake, the effects of it were felt throughout a wide extent of territory. While it levelled with the dust the ancient monarchy of France, it shook the thrones of almost all the European potentates. *Freedom* became the general watchword, on the part of the people. Kings became jealous of their subjects. A feeling of insecurity was experienced by crowned heads, and they had recourse to vigorous measures, in order to suppress the popular movements. The rulers of Britain took alarm at the progress of events. Existing institutions were considered to be in danger, and the friends of order were required to come forward and give them their support. Many responded to the call. Being desirous to acquire a reputation for loyalty, they subscribed a declaration expressive of their approbation of the British constitution, and of their determina-

tion to defend and maintain it against all who might attempt its subversion. In the lists of these subscribers, the names of Seceders were found as well as others. Some there were who had conscientious objections against such subscriptions, as ensnaring to the people, and inconsistent with the Secession testimony; but the chief ground of objection against them was, that subscribing such declarations implied an approbation of the English hierarchy, as forming a part of the British constitution, and an acquiescence in the ecclesiastical supremacy claimed and exercised by the sovereign, as an essential branch of the royal prerogative.

This subject was brought before the General Associate synod, at their meeting in May, 1795. A paper was laid upon their table, by the presbytery of Perth, complaining of "the snares and dangers" to which the people under their charge were exposed, in consequence of the artful methods employed to induce them to subscribe such declarations, by representing the British constitution to be the very same with the form of civil government; and calling upon the synod to take the matter of these subscriptions into their serious consideration, and to declare more fully than they had hitherto done, the ground of their dissatisfaction with the united British constitution; also to show the consistency of their testimony against it, with a dutiful subjection to the present civil government, in all its lawful commands; giving, at the same time, such directions to the people as might prevent them from being entangled in such snares.

After long deliberation upon the subject of this overture, the synod agreed in declaring to all the people under their inspection, "that they ought to be upon their guard against all measures tending to ensnare them into such oaths and practices as are contrary to their Christian and witnessing profession." They reminded them, that "all oaths and declarations are to be understood, not according to any secret or reserved sense which individuals put upon them in their own mind, but according to the meaning affixed to them by those persons for whose satisfaction they are sworn and subscribed, agreeably to the common use of language in the country." And as there were no oaths to government but what applied an approbation of the united constitution, they therefore pronounced all declarations or subscriptions expressive of an unqualified satisfaction with government to be unwarrantable. "It is not," they said, "at all to be wondered at, though people of tender consciences should hesitate to subscribe a declaration of unqualified attachment to the British constitution, as established in King, Lords, and Commons; while the ecclesiastical supremacy, according to that constitution, is an

essential branch of the royal prerogative: nay, while the maintenance of the English hierarchy is secured by it, and archbishops and bishops of the Church of England are an essential branch of the House of Lords." They added, "It has been proved by the experience of nearly an hundred years, that people may have scruples at all these things, and yet be good subjects, conducting themselves in as quiet, peaceable, and orderly a manner in society, as those who are the warmest advocates for them." In conclusion they declared, "that they never expressed any scruple with the form of civil government, as settled in a King, temporal Lords, and Commons;" and they gave a strong recommendation to their people, to behave themselves, as they had hitherto done, as the meek and quiet in the land. Sessions were required to "sist" all procedure against those persons who had inadvertently subscribed such unqualified declarations as above, on their signifying their acquiescence in the judgment of synod; but those who obstinately refused to listen to the warnings of their ministers and sessions, were to be dealt with "more particularly and closely."

Insinuations unfavourable to the loyalty and the peaceable behaviour of Seceders were at this time publicly thrown out against them. Attempts were made to injure their character, and to hold them up as objects of suspicion to the civil rulers, by representing them as disaffected to the government, and anxious for the overthrow of existing institutions. A representation was accordingly made, at the above meeting, by the provincial synod of Edinburgh, calling upon the General Synod to adopt, without delay, measures for removing such injurious and groundless aspersions. A proposal was submitted for the appointment of a committee, to prepare a statement of the principles held by the General Synod, and the other synods of the association, in reference to the civil government, and the dutiful subjection to it, which they reckoned themselves ever bound to maintain, in consistency with their solemn engagements to promote reformation; also to show, that neither the synod nor the religious society connected with them, as such, had ever said or done anything, in reference to the political questions which then divided the nation, or the measures which had been adopted by some for prosecuting a civil reform, that could justly expose them to the jealousy of the civil rulers, or to the obloquy of the well-affected portion of the community. This proposal was cordially adopted, and Messrs. Bruce and Whytock were appointed a committee to prepare a statement on this subject, to be afterwards submitted to the consideration of the synod.

One of the ministers belonging to the synod stepped forward, at this crisis, as the avowed champion of the British government. He published a political pamphlet in its defence, entitled, *Essays on Government, Revolution, &c.* The writer was Mr. John Young, minister at Hawick. In the introduction, he gave the following apology for appearing in the character of a political partisan:—"He (the author) has seen, with deep concern, that, by the active part which some dissenters, both in England and Scotland, have taken in the present disputes, an odium has been brought upon the dissenting interest, in the eyes of government and its adherents, which will not be easily wiped off. By this means, he is afraid, a very strong bar is placed in the way of the legislature's granting that indulgence to protestant dissenters, which they seem disposed to extend to every other denomination of men. And he knows, that, though the principles of the Secession Church, with relation to the civil government in this nation, have been fully laid before the world fifty years ago; and though Seceders have always given the most unequivocal proofs of their loyalty on every proper occasion, yet there never have been wanting some who attempt to traduce them as enemies to the present government: And at this time there are not a few who consider all Seceders, influenced by the peculiar sentiments of their society, as ringleaders of that party who avowedly set themselves to oppose the measures of government, to embarrass its motions, and to overturn it, if possible, from the foundation. The publication of these Essays will at least convince them that some Seceders are of a different mind."\*

Mr. Young's pamphlet could not fail to be peculiarly acceptable to those who ruled the destinies of Britain at this period.† It is clearly and vigorously written, and breathes, from beginning to end, a spirit of high toryism. He impugns the motives, and condemns the proceedings, of those

\* P. 3.

† In a series of letters, which appeared in 1819, in the London Philanthropic Gazette, on the subject of the proposed union betwixt the Burgher and Anti-Burgher Seceders, we find the following anecdote respecting Mr. Young's publication. The writer says:—"The following anecdote respecting Mr. Young's work, I had from a very reverend gentleman, still alive, and one of the brightest ornaments which adorn the National Church. Soon after its publication, at a dinner given by the Lord-chancellor of England, where were present—the late Dr. Moore, Archbishop of Canterbury, Dr. Horsley (then Bishop of Rochester), several other dignified clergymen, and the gentleman who related the circumstance to me—the conversation turned on the immense number of publications, which had been produced by the French Revolution: some spoke well of one, and some of another. The Lord-chancellor said, that the best he had seen was written by a Scotch Seceder, Mr. Young in Hawick, and strongly recommended the work to the attention of the Archbishop and Bishops."

who were styled *the Friends of the People*. He ridicules the idea of common mechanics intermeddling with the affairs of government, as being above their capacity, and foreign to their pursuits; declares himself hostile to reform, on the ground that it was unnecessary, and that the advantages resulting from it would be more than counterbalanced by the disadvantages; eulogizes the British constitution as the perfection of political wisdom, as a model of excellence, which it would be profane to touch with any innovating hand; inculcates submission to civil rulers, in language that savours much of the exploded doctrines of passive obedience and non-resistance; and, in fine, he attempts a vindication of the ministry for involving the country in a war with France, and justifies the strong measures which they adopted for putting down sedition at home.

Owing to the strong political excitement that prevailed, the pamphlet was read with avidity, and went through several editions in the course of a few months. For the service which the writer rendered the government, by the publication of it, he was offered a pension, which he declined. But though the sentiments which the pamphlet contains were agreeable to those in power, and to that class who looked with an evil eye upon all changes, they gave offence to many; they ran counter, in most particulars, to the current opinions of the day. Mr. Young was accused of having advanced doctrines inconsistent with the testimony of the church to which he belonged, and the language which he had employed in discussing the various topics of his book, was regarded as objectionable.

On these grounds, a formal complaint was preferred against him at the above meeting of synod; and a motion was made, that a committee be appointed to examine his book, to see whether the complaint was well or ill founded, so far as related to the received principles and testimony of the Secession, excluding all matter that was wholly of a political or a civil nature. This motion, after some discussion, was adopted; and Messrs. Archibald Bruce, James Robertson, and John Stewart, were appointed a committee for this purpose.\* From this resolution Messrs. John Buist and George Whytock dissented; and the following ministers craved to have it marked, that they had voted against the motion, as "altogether improper and unseasonable,"—Messrs. George Murray, James Ramsay, John Jamieson, Alexander Moncrieff, and James Thomson.

Another pamphlet, called forth by the spirit of the times,

\* It does not appear that any farther procedure took place in the synod in reference to this matter.

was made the subject of synodical animadversion at this meeting. Mr. James Wat, one of the synod's preachers, having been appointed to go on a mission to Pennsylvania, not only refused to fulfil his appointment, but wrote a pamphlet on the disputed topic of the magistrate's power in matters of religion. This publication contained some severe strictures on the Secession Testimony, and on the conduct of the ministers and people connected with the synod. The Testimony was charged with sanctioning intolerance and persecution, and the ministers and people were accused of inconsistency and prevarication. Mr. Wat refusing to make the necessary acknowledgments, was suspended from the exercise of his licence, as a preacher of the gospel; and the provincial synod of Glasgow was empowered, by the supreme court, to deal with him, and to bring the cause to a final decision.

The synod of Glasgow held several conferences with Mr. Wat, on the subject of his pamphlet, in which they stated to him, that they did not quarrel with him on the ground of his general principle, in favour of religious liberty, as they understood the very same principle to be held by the Secession Church, and to be expressly taught in the Declaration and Defence formerly published by the Associate Presbytery. They wished him to acknowledge that the consequences which he had deduced from his general principle, were not applicable to the Secession, and that the charge of inconsistency and dishonesty, which he had advanced against the members of synod, and the people under their inspection, was without any proper foundation; inasmuch as those phrases in the Confession of Faith, which appeared to ascribe too much power to the magistrate in matters of religion, were to be understood according to the explanation given of the synod's principles in said Declaration and Defence. Moreover, it was stated to him, that the publication of his pamphlet, in present circumstances, was the more unseasonable, and the attack which he had made the more unjust, when an overture on the subject of the magistrate's power, having for its object the placing of this doctrine in a clearer light, had been prepared and transmitted to the several presbyteries and sessions, for their consideration.

Mr. Wat's Confessions not being deemed sufficiently satisfactory by the provincial synod, his case was again brought before the supreme court, at their meeting in May, 1796; and it was not till after considerable trouble, that they obtained from him the necessary acknowledgments, when they again restored him to the exercise of his licence. But no sooner was the sentence of restoration pronounced, than Mr. Wat expressed a wish to communicate his sentiments on some other subjects.

A committee was appointed to retire and to converse with him ; and after the conference was ended, Mr. Wat read a paper, and lodged it with the clerk, in which he formally renounced the doctrine of the synod concerning infant baptism ; the warrantableness and use of Confessions of Faith, and the presbyterial form of church government ; and declined all future connection with the synod. On receiving this document, the synod deprived him of his licence to preach, and pronounced upon him the sentence of the lesser excommunication.

The question concerning the power of the civil magistrate in matters of religion, now occupied a considerable share of the public attention. It was agitated in the church courts of the Secession, and became the topic of almost daily discussion amongst the people. The language employed in the Confession of Faith, upon this subject, was considered objectionable by many, as ascribing to the magistrate, in religious matters, a power which did not belong to him ; and conscientious scruples were entertained about giving an unlimited assent to those passages where such language is employed. The following are the passages in the Confession to which these scruples were chiefly applicable :—“And because the powers which God hath ordained, and the liberty which Christ hath purchased, are not intended by God to destroy, but mutually to uphold and preserve one another ; they who, upon pretence of Christian liberty, shall oppose any lawful power, or the lawful exercise of it, whether it be civil or ecclesiastical, resist the ordinance of God. And for their publishing of such opinions, or maintaining of such practices, as are contrary to the light of nature, or to the known principles of Christianity, whether concerning faith, worship, or conversation, or to the power of godliness ; or such erroneous opinions or practices, as are, either in their own nature, or in the manner of publishing or maintaining them, destructive to the external peace and order which Christ hath established in the church ; they may lawfully be called to account, and proceeded against by the censures of the church, and by the power of the civil magistrate.” (Chap. xx. Sect. 4.)

“The civil magistrate may not assume to himself the administration of the word and sacraments, or the power of the keys of the kingdom of heaven ; yet he hath authority, and it is his duty, to take order, that unity and peace be preserved in the church, that the truth of God be kept pure and entire, that all blasphemies and heresies be suppressed, all corruptions and abuses in worship and discipline prevented or reformed, and all the ordinances of God duly settled, administered, and observed. For the better effecting whereof, he

hath power to call synods, to be present at them, and to provide that whatsoever is transacted in them be according to the mind of God." (Chap. xxiii. Sect. 3.)

In the formula of questions put to probationers before receiving licence, and to ministers and elders before being ordained, the second is to the following effect:—"Do you sincerely own and believe the *whole doctrine* contained in the Confession of Faith, compiled by the Assembly of Divines that met at Westminster, with commissioners from the Church of Scotland?" &c. In giving an affirmative answer to this question, without any limiting clause, entrants into office were considered as giving a full assent to the doctrine contained in the above paragraphs, concerning the power of the magistrate to suppress blasphemies and heresies; to prevent or reform all corruptions and abuses in worship and discipline; to call to account persons publishing erroneous opinions, and to exercise a control over the deliberations of synods.

This doctrine had been virtually rejected by the Associate Presbytery, in the "Declaration and Defence of their Principles concerning the Civil Government," which they published within a few years after the commencement of the Secession.\* In that Declaration they affirmed, that "the public good of outward and common order, in all reasonable society, to the glory of God, is the great and *only* end which those invested with magistracy can propose, in a sole respect to that office:" And that, "as in prosecuting this end civilly, according to their office, it is only over men's good and evil works that they can have any inspection, so it is only over these which they must needs take cognizance of, for the said public good; while, at the same time, their doing so must be in such a manner, and proceed so far alienarily, as is requisite for that end, without assuming any lordship immediately over men's consciences, or making any encroachment upon the special privileges or business of the church."

Though it was not formally expressed, yet it was understood, that preachers, and ministers, and elders, when giving their assent to the second question of the formula, expressive of their belief in the whole doctrine of the Confession of Faith, did so with the above qualifying explanation concerning the power of the civil magistrate in matters of religion. When candidates for the ministry expressed a wish to any of the judicatories, to know in what sense they were to understand the two doubtful paragraphs, they were uniformly told, that they were to understand them only in such a sense as corresponded with the explanation given in the presbytery's answers to Mr. Nairn.

\* In 1743: See the account of the presbytery's controversy with Mr. Nairn.

But there were some whom this verbal declaration did not satisfy. They did not wish to have even the appearance of assenting to one thing and believing another. The assent which they gave to the *whole doctrine* of the Confession, at their ordination, was given publicly in the presence of the people; whereas the explanation, as to the sense in which they understood the doctrine taught in the Confession, concerning the power of the magistrate in religious matters, was a transaction which took place betwixt them and the presbytery; and even though it might be known that such an explanation had been given, yet it had the appearance of inconsistency to give a formal assent to language, the meaning of which they understood in a sense so different from that which the words literally expressed. A general wish prevailed that the synod would remove all ambiguity and all appearance of inconsistency, by giving an avowed and explicit declaration of their sentiments on this contested point.

An overture to this effect had been transmitted from the Glasgow presbytery to the General Synod, at their meeting in May, 1791; and before any definite measures were adopted on the subject, the overture was sent down to the provincial synods, that the brethren might have it under consideration till next meeting. When the synod met in the month of May, the following year, a committee was appointed to prepare an act in terms of the overture. But nothing farther was done in the matter for a considerable time afterward.

Before the committee's report was given in, a reference from the presbytery of Edinburgh brought before the synod the case of two licentiates, who were about to be ordained, and who declared that their doubts, concerning the doctrine taught in the Confession of Faith regarding the power of the magistrate in matters of religion, were so strong, that they had not freedom to give an unlimited answer to the second question in the formula, and could not submit to ordination, unless the moderator of the presbytery was allowed, when proposing the questions of the formula to them, to intimate that they were not to be understood as giving their sentiments on that point. This, they supposed, might be done; as an overture had already been introduced into the supreme court on the subject. These two young men, whose scruples were so strong as to render a particular application to the General Synod, on their behalf, necessary, were Mr. Thomas M'Crie, and Mr. William M'Ewan,—the one of whom was about to be ordained at Edinburgh, and the other at Howgate.

The presbytery, being a subordinate court, did not think themselves at liberty to make any alteration in the public profession of the religious society to which they belonged; neither

could they grant the dispensation, that was claimed, without introducing a precedent, which if allowed in one particular, might have been followed in all,—and thus have frustrated the very object for which the formula of questions was proposed to candidates for the sacred office. The matter was accordingly brought before the supreme court, by reference, on the 2d of May, 1796; and a committee was appointed to consider what ought to be done for removing the difficulties of Messrs. M'Crie and M'Ewan. It was considered the more necessary that something should be immediately done, as similar scruples were entertained by other young men, concerning the much contested doctrine of the power of the magistrate in religious matters. An overture on this subject had formerly been transmitted by Mr. Buist, minister at Greenock. This overture was now read; and the committee were required to make it the groundwork of their deliberations, and to prepare it for the judgment of synod.

On the next day, the committee presented the following declaratory act, which, after being read and receiving such amendments as the synod thought necessary, was unanimously adopted:—"The synod finding that they cannot at present enter on a particular consideration of the overture, respecting the power of the civil magistrate in matters of religion,—but convinced of the urgent necessity of doing something in the meantime to obviate the scruples which young men at licence, preachers and elders at ordination, private persons at their accession and baptism of their children, have offered to the courts about the doctrine or manner of expression, used on that subject, in the Confession of Faith, chap. xxiii. sect. 3d, and chap. xx. sect. 4th.

"Declare, That as the Confession of Faith was at first received by the Church of Scotland with some exception, as to the power of the civil magistrate relative to spiritual matters, so the synod, for the satisfaction of all who desire to know their mind on this subject, extend that exception to every thing in the Confession which, taken by itself, seems to allow the punishment of good and peaceable subjects on account of their religious opinions and observances: That they approve of no other means of bringing men into the church, or retaining them in it, than such as are spiritual, and were used by the apostles and other ministers of the word in the first ages of the Christian church, persuasion not force, the power of the gospel not the sword of the civil magistrate, agreeably to that most certain and important doctrine laid down in the Confession itself, chap. xx. sect. 2d. 'God alone is the Lord of the conscience, and has left it free from the doctrines and commandments of men, which are in any thing con-

trary to his word, or beside it, in matters of faith or worship; so that to believe such doctrines, or obey such commands out of conscience, is to betray true liberty of conscience and reason also.'

"Nor do the synod mean the smallest reflection on the venerable compilers of the Confession, whose degrees of light on these matters, and peculiar circumstances, seem to have led them to use some expressions that have been understood by many, and may be construed as investing civil rulers with a lordship over the consciences of men, and inconsistent with the spirituality, freedom, and independence of the kingdom of Christ. And the synod hereby renew their adherence to the doctrine on this point, in the Declaration and Defence of the Associate Presbytery's principles concerning the present civil government, under the fourth argument from Romans xiii. 1—7. in these words:—'The public good of outward and common order in all reasonable society, unto the glory of God, is the great and only end which those invested with magistracy can propose, in a sole respect to that office; and as in prosecuting this end civilly, according to their office, it is only over men's good and evil works that they can have any inspection, so it is only over these, which they must needs take cognizance of, for the said public good; while, at the same time, their doing so must be in such a manner, and proceed so far alienably, as it is requisite for that end, without assuming any lordship immediately over men's consciences, or making any encroachment upon the special privileges and business of the church; and moreover as the whole institution and end of their office are cut out by, and lie within the compass of natural principles, it were absurd to suppose, that there could or ought to be any exercise thereof towards its end, in the foresaid circumstances, but what can be urged for, and defended from, natural principles.'

"And the synod hereby agree, that in the second question of the formula, after the words, 'as the said Confession was received and approved by an act of Assembly, 1647, Session 23,' there shall be added, 'and according to the declaration of the General Associate synod, 1796.'"

By this declaratory act the scruples of Messrs. M'Crie and M'Ewan were so far removed, that they submitted to ordination.\*

\* It may be proper here to state that the sentiments of Mr. (afterward Dr.) M'Crie soon after this underwent a change, with regard to the power of the magistrate in matters of religion. This change he formally announced in a sermon which he preached at the opening of the General Associate Synod in 1800; and because the synod continued to adhere to the sentiments expressed

Mr. Bruce having prepared, agreeably to a former appointment, a statement of the principles held by the synod, with regard to the civil government, and the duty of yielding submission to it, this statement was read to the synod at their present meeting. After hearing it read, the synod found that they could not enter upon such a consideration of it, as was necessary in order to give it their official sanction. The contents of it do not appear to have been agreeable to the mind of the court; for when a vote was taken upon the question whether they should return the overture to Mr. Bruce, or recommit it, it carried by a great majority that it should be intrusted to a new committee. From this decision Mr. Bruce dissented, on the ground that the synod were losing the first and fittest opportunity of vindicating the "Associate body" from very injurious aspersions; and declared that he should not be considered as consenting, even by longer silence and delay, that these aspersions should remain uncontradicted.

At this meeting, the attention of the synod was called to the subject of missionary societies, which were now forming in every part of the kingdom. While all good persons rejoiced in the zeal for the propagation of the gospel, which was now rapidly diffusing itself throughout the different sections of the Christian church,—there were some who did not approve of the principle on which these societies were formed. Though well affected to the benevolent object which they were intended to accomplish, they considered them as too latitudinarian in their constitution. They objected to them on the ground of Christians, whose profession was widely different, intermingling together in the most solemn acts of religious worship; thereby nullifying, or at least neutralizing, the testimony which each sect was supposed to lift up against the errors of all the rest. They objected to them, further on the ground that laymen, who had not been called, or set apart, to bear rule in the church, were united along with ministers in judging of the qualifications of the missionaries, and in sending them forth to their work; and that, in doing so, they usurped the ministerial functions,—thereby breaking down the comely order of church government, which Christ had appointed.

By an overture brought before the synod, they were required to declare their opinion, how far it was consistent with church order, and with the testimony to which they professedly adhered, for the ministers and people belonging to the association to connect themselves with such societies. A con-

in the above act, he ultimately renounced (as we shall afterwards see) his connexion with it.

siderable diversity of sentiment prevailed among the members of synod on this point. After long and repeated discussions, they found that they were unable to come to an harmonious agreement upon the question. A committee was appointed to take the subject into consideration, and to prepare an act to be submitted to the synod at their next meeting. At the meeting of synod in October, the same year, this committee presented an overture, which they had prepared; but the sentiments of members were as much divided as before. In the course of the discussions which ensued, the following motion was proposed, as expressive of the judgment of the synod on this question :—"The synod cannot but approve of the great design of missionary societies for sending the gospel to the heathen; firmly believing that the time is speedily approaching, when the salvation of our great and common Lord shall be known to all people; rejoice in, and resolve to improve, all openings of Providence to that purpose. But considering the constitution of these societies, as formed of people widely different in their religious profession and communion, not only of private Christians, but of ministers acting in their official capacity; meeting together for acts of public worship; claiming a power in common of directing all the affairs of the mission; and some of them exercising the power of ordination and authoritative mission also: The synod judge that neither their own members, nor the people under their inspection, can, in a consistency with their distinguishing profession as Seceders, and without danger of falling from it, publicly co-operate with these societies in their present state." This motion was carried in opposition to another which was made,—that the synod should delay the whole affair. Several ministers entered their protest against it, on the ground that it was an infringement of their Christian liberty: and they declared that, while they disclaimed all approbation of promiscuous church communion, they would not be precluded from giving their countenance and support to missionary societies.

The adopting of the above motion, by the synod, did not arise from any indifference, on the part of the members, to the great cause of missions. In the course of the preceding narrative abundant proof has been given, that this was a cause to which, as a church court, they were warmly devoted. Though they had not as yet undertaken any mission to the heathen, they had sent numerous preachers to foreign districts, where their labours were as much required as amongst the heathen. Scarcely a year passed away, during which they did not send one or more labourers to a foreign station, so that America

\* Mr. Ferrier of Paisley took the lead in this protestation.

could at this period boast of many thriving churches planted by the exertions of the Secession;\* and if the synod could have found a proper supply of young men, who were both able and willing to engage in missionary work, the number of these foreign churches would ere this time have been doubled or quadrupled. The expense of these missions, too, was defrayed, not by contributions gathered promiscuously from the religious public, but solely by collections made throughout the congregations belonging to the Association;—all of whom, be it remembered, had to build their own churches, and to support their own ministers at home. Whatever opinion, then, may be entertained of the deliverance which the synod gave concerning missionary societies, it cannot be imputed to any feeling of lukewarmness which they had with regard to the extension of the Redeemer's kingdom. They had given frequent and substantial proof of the deep interest which they took in the diffusion of the gospel. But they had high ideas of church order; and it was because they conceived that this order was infringed by the constitution and proceedings of these societies, that they came to the above determination. Whether they were right or wrong in the opinion which they formed, must be left to each to judge for himself.

The synod ordered this act to be printed, and two copies of it to be sent to each session. When circulated among the congregations, it excited a considerable feeling of disapprobation. This feeling manifested itself in petitions and remonstrances presented against it at the meeting of synod held in the spring of the following year. Two ministers,† who had been absent at the preceding meeting, when the resolution was adopted, craved that their protest against it should be recorded,—which was granted. A remonstrance was presented against it by Messrs. Alexander Pringle of Perth, and John Macara of Pathstruie Hill, in which they complained that the synod had given an unjust representation, in said deed, of missionary societies,—that the obnoxious resolution was ambiguously worded, glaringly deficient, and had been rashly adopted;—and they craved, that the synod would review their act, and deliberately consider what steps God in his providence was calling upon them to take, “in a consistency with truth and present duty.”

\* A writer in the first volume of the *Christian Magazine*, published in 1797, bears the following testimony to the zeal and liberality which the General Associate Synod had displayed in support of foreign missions:—“The General Synod have expended large sums of money in missions in America already. From first to last, I do not know but *fifty ministers* and more have gone out to that country under the patronage, and the most of these at the expense, of the synod.” P. 119.

† Messrs. Thomson of Mearns, and Macewan of Dundee.

Remonstrances, to a similar effect, were presented from the session and congregation of Huntly, from several elders and other members of the congregation of Keith, from the minister and some of the members of the congregation of London; and a verbal communication was made from the presbytery of Elgin, stating, that they disapproved of the act, and were of opinion that it ought not to have been passed. An overture was also transmitted on the same subject from the presbytery of Perth, in which, for reasons therein assigned, they craved : —“ That the synod express more fully, than in their late act, their hearty approbation of the great object of missionary societies for spreading the gospel, and of their zealous exertions, so far as it is consistent with the word of God, in behalf of our heathen brethren perishing in gross ignorance: That they warmly recommend to all under their inspection, both ministers and people, the important duty of fervent and frequent prayer for the revival of religion in all the churches of Christ, and for the extension of his kingdom to the ends of the earth; and that meetings for social prayer and conference be regularly observed with this view: That as the synod judge a full co-operation with the missionary societies, as presently constituted and conducted, inconsistent with our professed principles, they should now give such particular directions as may be necessary for regulating the conduct of those under their inspection: That the synod declare their thankfulness to God, and their unfeigned satisfaction on account of the evident increase of gospel light, especially in England: That they encourage the friends of evangelical truth to hold fast what they have attained, and to proceed in the investigation of truth and in the work of the Lord: That they express a hope, that the time is fast approaching when the watchmen of Zion’s walls shall see eye to eye, shall sing together with the voice, and shall call upon the name of the Lord to serve him with one consent: And, finally, that they take some steps towards opening a correspondence with the friends of truth and godliness in other denominations.”

On the other hand, two representations were sent up, approving of what the synod had done in reference to missionary societies. One of these was from some of the elders and other members of the congregation of Dundee; and the other was from the session of Kirriemuir. The session desired to be thankful, that the Lord had enabled the synod to make a stand for his cause, and they heartily approved of the synod’s judgment, as far as it went; but they apprehended, that there was a loud call given to the synod to explain themselves agreeably to their professed principles more fully upon the subject. They therefore entreated the synod to take the missionary

scheme again under their serious consideration, "to display their testimony more largely against it, in its complex state;" and particularly to declare, "that all co-operation with the missionary societies, while on their present footing, is inconsistent with a steadfast holding of the testimony which the Lord hath put into our hands."

These various papers being read, the subject to which they referred underwent a long discussion, which terminated in the synod's adopting a motion explanatory of their former act. They declared, that by "*publicly co-operating with the missionary societies*," in their act of last meeting, they meant "such co-operation, and such only, as includes a joining in public acts of worship, or in the exercise of church authority with people of other denominations, and especially with ministers acting in their official capacity." At the same time, they appointed a committee to state more fully the views of the synod respecting missionary societies. Several ministers craved, that it might be marked, that they had voted against this decision. On the other hand, Mr. Ferrier withdrew his protest.

A reference from one of the presbyteries in Ireland brought before the synod, at this meeting, a case of casuistry, which they were required to determine. The question, which the case involved, was, Whether Seceders in Ireland could, consistently with their professed principles, take the oath of allegiance to their civil rulers, in the present circumstances of that kingdom? The oath, which they were required to take, was to the following effect:—"I, A. B. sincerely promise, and swear, and affirm, that I will be faithful, and bear true allegiance to his Majesty, King George the Third; and that I will faithfully maintain and support the laws and constitution of this kingdom, and his succession to the throne in his Majesty's illustrious house. So help me God."

Mr. Biggar, a member of the presbytery of Belfast, had taken this oath; but in taking it, he stated to the administrator, that he took it with the following limitation, viz. that he swore to maintain the constitution of the kingdom of Ireland only in matters civil, excluding all approbation of the king's ecclesiastical supremacy, and the hierarchy of the Church of Ireland. A written attestation was given to Mr. Biggar, by the person who administered the oath, that it had been given and taken with the above limitation. The presbytery craved the synod to declare, whether it was consistent with the Secession testimony to swear such an oath, even though qualified in the manner now mentioned. This question the synod answered in the negative. They were decided in declaring, that it was inconsistent with the testimony,

which Seceders professed to maintain, to take an oath containing in it an unlimited approbation of the united constitution of church and state, even though the person swearing it should declare that he took it with the limitation already specified : And while they expressed their sympathy with Mr. Biggar as placed in circumstances peculiarly trying, they at the same time expressed their disapprobation of his conduct in this instance ; and they recommended it to all the ministers and people in Ireland, under their superintendence, to be upon their guard against being insnared for the future. They added, " yet the synod do not find fault with offering professions or declarations of dutiful subjection to the civil powers on any proper occasion."

This year an application was made to the synod, by some of the inhabitants of the state of Kentucky, to send out missionaries to that part of America. The application was favourably entertained by the synod ; and two of their preachers, Messrs. Andrew Fulton and Robert Armstrong, having expressed a willingness to undertake the mission, they were appointed to be ordained, and to proceed to the place of their destination with all convenient speed. Instructions were given to them, that so soon as they should arrive in Kentucky, they should constitute themselves into a presbytery, in immediate subordination to the synod, under the designation of " The Associate Presbytery of Kentucky." The presbytery of Kelso was instructed to write a letter to the brethren of the presbytery of Pennsylvania, accounting for these two brethren being missioned not in a state of subordination to that presbytery ; and the presbytery of Perth, through whom the application had been made to the synod, was appointed to write a suitable address to the inhabitants of Kentucky. To defray the expense of the mission, a collection was appointed to be made in the several congregations under the inspection of the synod in Britain, " so as that these young men may be conveyed to the scene of their labour in such a manner as may be for the credit of religion and of the synod." These brethren set sail for America in the end of summer, 1797. During the course of the following year, intelligence was received from Pennsylvania, expressive of the high gratification which the brethren belonging to that presbytery felt in the mission to Kentucky, and declaring their readiness to co-operate with their brethren in Kentucky, so far as circumstances might permit.. The Pennsylvanian brethren also intimated, that they had it in contemplation to disjoin themselves into several presbyteries, and to erect a transatlantic synod, maintaining the same connexion with the General Synod, in Scotland, as they now did in their presbyterial capacity.

A new field of labour for the ministers of the Secession was, at this period, opened up in the Orkney Islands. It will be difficult to point to a district in the British islands, where a faithful gospel ministry was more required; and there is none where the labourers of the Secession ministers have been crowned with more distinguished success, than in these islands of the north. Previous to the introduction of the Secession into them, the spiritual destitution of the inhabitants was great. On account of their insular situation, and on account of two or three parishes being united under the charge of one minister, and these parishes separated from one another by dangerous friths, the people, in many instances, were deprived of a regular dispensation of gospel ordinances. It was not uncommon for some of the insular parishes to be without sermon for months together, especially during the winter season.

An Orcadian, in a communication inserted in one of the religious periodicals of that day,\* gives the following account of the religious state of these islands:—"While in some parts of Orkney there is very little of a gospel dispensation, in other parts of it there is no gospel dispensation at all. The parish churches have been in a ruinous state for many years; and as ministers do not reckon themselves obliged to preach unless they are furnished with a church to preach in, the consequence is, that many of our poor Orcadians hear as little about Christ and his salvation, in the preaching of the gospel, as the inhabitants of Otaheite or Japan. I have heard that it has been pled by some of our clergy, and all who esteem and revere the sacred character as I do, will be charitably disposed to put the best construction upon it, that it is the most likely way to bring the heritors to a sense of their duty, to preach none in those parishes where the churches are in ruins till they are properly repaired. I am disposed however, to think, that if our good clergy would collect their scattered flock, and now and then give them a sermon, though delivered in the fields, or from a fishing boat, as our blessed Lord frequently did, this, I presume, would be a more likely way to put heritors in mind of their duty, than for ministers to neglect theirs. At any rate, what a pity is it that our poor islanders, through the fault of others, should be deprived of a gospel dispensation! If ministers and heritors, through their omission, should suffer our souls to perish, will all the produce of the valuable kelp shores of Orkney refund the loss? But ruinous as many of our churches are, they are not all on a level with the dust. The incumbent of two parishes has generally one church in repair. Now, if field preaching is reckoned improper by our

\* Christian Magazine for 1797, p. 80.

clergy, or if in our climate it is really impracticable in the winter season, might not the Sabbath be spent in public worship in the other parish, where the church is in repair? But *the common practice in Orkney is*, that the minister preaches one Sabbath in the parish where the church is in repair, and, strange to tell! lies perfectly idle on the next, and so leaves both his parishes totally destitute of gospel ordinances. Is this a spending or being spent for Christ? Or, is this an imitation of the example of their great Master, who went about continually doing good? I never was disposed to bring a railing accusation against any one, far less against the ministers of Jesus; but I know that not a few will be applying to our Orkney clergy the saying of the prophet, 'His watchmen are dumb dogs, they cannot bark; sleeping, lying down, loving slumber; yea, they are greedy dogs, which can never have enough.'"

A few individuals in the town of Kirkwall, with the view of providing for their own spiritual wants, as well as for the wants of their neighbours, formed the design, about the year 1795, of erecting a place of worship, and making application to the Secession for a supply of sermon. The undertaking, when first proposed, was regarded by almost all who heard of it as Quixotic. The persons with whom it originated were few in number; and they occupied a humble station in life. At a recent meeting of the General Assembly, the funds of the national church had been found so embarrassed, that little or no assistance could be given for erecting parish churches in Orkney; and how could it be expected that a few mechanics should succeed in an enterprise of this nature? The attempt, however, was made, and succeeded beyond expectation. Those who engaged in it received the most liberal support; and by the successful issue of the undertaking, a gratifying illustration was afforded of the sentiment, that when men cordially embark in any cause, it is difficult to say to what extent they will carry it, or with what success their labours shall finally be crowned. A place of worship was erected, and an application being made to the General Associate synod, a regular supply of sermon was sent. The preaching of the Secession ministers excited a deep interest not only in Kirkwall, but in the neighbouring islands. Such was the eagerness of the people to hear, that every seat in the church was immediately let. About a year after the church was opened, the sacrament of the Lord's Supper was dispensed in the Associate congregation, for the first time, by Messrs. Stuart and Bunyan, who had been sent by the synod for this purpose. Upwards of two hundred communicants sat down at the table of the Lord; and a considerable number more

were examined, who could not at the time be admitted. The ordinary place of worship could not contain a third part of the persons who were present, so that they were under the necessity of dispensing that solemn ordinance in the field. There were many present from islands which lie at a great distance from Kirkwall. Some of these persons, though upwards of thirty years of age, had never before witnessed the celebration of the ordinance of the Supper. During the visit of Messrs. Stuart and Bunyan, one of these brethren preached in Birza, and the other in the island of Shapinshay, where they had numerous and attentive audiences.

The mission of Messrs. Stuart and Bunyan to Orkney was followed by an affecting incident. These two brethren, on their way home, were captured by a French privateer. The Frenchmen treated them with respect, gave them every thing that they claimed as their own, and having conveyed them within a mile of the shore, they put them and the ship's crew into the long-boat and left them. Mr. Stuart, who had been, for some time, in a delicate state of health, sustained a severe shock, by the fatigues to which, in consequence of his capture, he was subjected. Soon after his return home to Falkirk (the scene of his ministerial labour), he went to Edinburgh to procure a consultation of the medical faculty. He returned home in the course of a day or two; and had reached his own dwelling, when, as they were in the act of assisting him out of the carriage, he expired. His death was much lamented by his people; and he left behind him the character of being a faithful and affectionate minister.

The introduction of the Secession into Orkney was productive of the happiest effects. A new impulse was given to religion amongst the inhabitants of these interesting isles. A strong desire was excited to hear the gospel preached, and serious impressions were produced in the minds of not a few. The word of the Lord had free course, and was glorified amongst them. The writer quoted above, speaking of the beneficial change which had been effected, within a short period, by the labours of the Secession preachers in that hitherto neglected region, says, "Since this church was opened, the worship of God has been set up in different families; the voice of joy and melody is heard in different habitations where it never was heard before. Meetings for prayer and religious conversation have likewise been instituted, and are uncommonly well attended. But there is not merely the form; I have every reason to believe, that there is more of the power of godliness displayed now, than has been for many years. There are several persons under the deepest convictions. They seem to experience all the pangs of the

new birth. They are adopting from the heart the language of the jailer, and are saying, 'Sirs, what must I do to be saved?' Others have a joy and a peace in believing. After having been in the deepest soul distress, they experience something like a heaven upon earth. There are many who are saying, that they never saw it so in Israel. May this cloud of the Spirit's influences, which is beginning to drop down upon us, wax greater and greater, till it cover the whole heavens."\*

In the spring of 1798, the Associate congregation of Kirkwall gave an unanimous call to Mr. William Broadfoot, who was ordained amongst them on the third of August, the same year. The ordination took place in the open air; as the church, which had been so lately erected, having already been found too small for the accommodation of the hearers, had been taken down for the purpose of being enlarged. So rapid had been the increase of the congregation, that at the period of Mr. Broadfoot's ordination, the number of members amounted to five hundred.

As there were many, throughout the Orkney islands, who had not been taught to read, nor instructed in the principles of the oracles of God, it was considered expedient to employ a catechist, who should read the scriptures, and communicate religious instruction, in a familiar manner, to these illiterate persons. Mr. Magnus Anderson, a member of the Kirkwall congregation, who had for some time been travelling, of his own accord, among the islands, reading and catechising, came to Edinburgh, and expressed a desire to the Associate presbytery (under whose superintendence the congregation had been placed by the General Associate synod), to be employed by them as a catechist, if they should find him qualified. The presbytery, having examined him as to his acquaintance with the principles and power of religion, agreed that he should act as a catechist under their inspection; and gave him instructions as to his plan of operation. They also agreed to give him, for the first year, a salary of twenty pounds; and afterwards to increase it, if it should be thought necessary.

In no part of the British dominions has the Secession prospered more than in Orkney. It has planted congregations in almost all the islands; and exercised an influence peculiarly favourable to the moral and religious improvement of the islanders. Sabbath schools, prayer-meetings, and associations for religious purposes, have been instituted; and the people are enjoying the benefits of a gospel ministry in many districts, where the benefits of such an institution were not pre-

\* Christian Magazine for 1797, p. 82.

viously enjoyed. The zeal and activity displayed by the Orkadian Seceders, both ministers and people, have been highly praiseworthy. In spite of the opposing influence exerted by those who were unfriendly to the progress of dissent, and in spite of the disadvantages connected with a thinly scattered, and for the most part poor, population, they have succeeded in establishing, by their own voluntary efforts, aided by the fostering care of the church courts, a regularly organized congregation, or a preaching-station, in almost every accessible spot. The parent stock, planted in Kirkwall, in the circumstances above described, has increased and ramified to such an extent, that instead of one congregation in connexion with the Secession, there is now a respectable presbytery in Orkney, consisting of ten congregations, besides some missionary stations.

In May, 1798, a representation was laid before the General Associate synod, by the presbytery of Aberdeen, concerning lay-preaching, and Sabbath evening schools. It was stated, that a great ferment prevailed among the congregations within their bounds, on these subjects; that some of the people highly approved of them, while others were keenly opposed to them. Those who attended upon the ministrations of the lay-preachers, that occasionally itinerated amongst them, were considered as acting inconsistently with their professed principles; and connected with the conducting of Sabbath evening schools, there were certain irregularities which gave offence; such as the singing of hymns, promiscuous communion, and permitting crowds of full grown persons to be present, to listen to the addresses; which was regarded as a species of lay-preaching. The presbytery craved that the synod would give authoritative directions to the people on these controverted points. A committee having been appointed to take the matter into consideration, an overture was prepared by them, and sanctioned by the synod, to the following effect:—The synod unanimously declared, that as lay-preaching has no warrant from the word of God, and as they had always considered it their duty to testify against promiscuous communion, no person under the inspection of the synod could consistently with their principles attend upon, or give any countenance to public preaching by any who were not of their communion; and should they do so, they ought to be subjected to the discipline of the Church. With regard to Sabbath evening schools, while the synod did not absolutely condemn them, but admitted that they might be the means of doing good to the young, if they were under proper regulations, yet they judged that no person under their inspection could, consistently with their principles, send their children to such schools, or other-

wise give them any countenance, if discourses were delivered in them tending to encroach upon the work of the ministry; if other persons were permitted to be present, besides the children to be instructed; if hymns of human composure were sung in them; if any thing was done or taught in them, inconsistent with the duties of the Sabbath-day; if attendance upon these schools should interfere with the duty of parental instruction at home; or if the minister and session under whose inspection they were, should not be satisfied with the character and principles of the persons who taught in the schools.

This declaration of the synod did not give satisfaction to all the parties concerned. At the meeting of the synod, in May the following year, the subject was again brought before them, in the shape of a representation from some of the sessions in the north, complaining of the convulsed state of their congregations. A petition also was presented from the congregation of Keith, and from several individuals connected with the teaching of Sabbath evening schools: and the synod were obliged to review and amend their former act. The amendments, however, were chiefly verbal; the spirit of the act remained the same. Instead of declaring that no person could consistently with their principles attend upon the ministrations of any one who did not belong to their communion, it was declared that no person could consistently give countenance to the public ministrations of any one bearing office in a church, against which the synod lifted up a testimony. Some members proposed, that the declaration should be qualified by introducing the phrase, "in ordinary circumstances." This was rejected, and Messrs. Muckersie, Ferrier, Culbertson, and John Mitchell, entered their dissent, on the ground of this clause being rejected, and for other reasons afterwards to be assigned.

During this summer (1799), intelligence of a gratifying kind was received from the two missionaries, Messrs. Armstrong and Fulton, who had been sent to Kentucky, in 1797. They arrived in that province in the month of March 1798; and, though they had considerable difficulties to encounter at first, and appear to have been discouraged by the general state of the country, yet a great and an effectual door was speedily opened unto them. More applications were made to them for sermon than they were able to answer. As soon as circumstances permitted, after their arrival, they constituted themselves into a presbytery. This took place at Canerun, on the 28th of November, 1798. The following account of the early difficulties and prospects of this mission,

extracted from the letters of these individuals, cannot fail to be interesting :—

“ We set sail (says Mr. Armstrong, in a letter dated 5th December, 1798) from Pittsburgh for Kentucky, on the 21st February, 1798; and, after a passage of nine days, arrived at Limestone, on the first of March. Limestone is 500 miles from Pittsburgh. The weather was for the most part cold and stormy, and our accommodation in the boat very indifferent. It was so much crowded with horses, baggage, and merchant goods, that there was scarcely any place in it where we could stretch ourselves to sleep; and, except a part of two nights, when we stopped the boat, and went ashore to a house, I slept little, and never pulled off my clothes. On one occasion, the darkness of the night rendering it dangerous to continue sailing, we fastened our boat to the bank of the river, and Mr. Fulton and I went in search of a house to lodge in. After traversing the woods of what is called the Indian shore, on the right hand side of the Ohio river, going down for a considerable time, we found that our search was in vain; for no habitation could be seen. There was a good deal of snow on the ground: we could not sleep on board, and we wanted rest somewhere. The only shift which now remained was to cut up logs for a fire. Three of us, Mr. Fulton, another young man, and myself, went to work, and kindled a fire as well as we could. I then chose a place to lie upon; and after scraping away the snow, and cutting up a piece of log for a pillow, I wrapped myself in a blanket, and lay down to sleep. When we had rested thus for about two hours, a great fall of wet snow obliged us to decamp, and again remove to the boat.

“ When we set sail at first, the river was low, and our vessel grounded, sometimes on shallows, sometimes on rocks; then all hands (myself only excepted), were obliged to assist, and jumping into the river, while the water reached to their loins, to force her off with long poles. Such a situation was not, in a cold frosty night, you may judge, very tolerable. There were only six men on board, which made it necessary for Mr. Fulton and me to take our full share of watching and rowing; this, as we generally sailed night and day, was labour sufficient.

“ A severe cold, contracted very suddenly at Pittsburgh, threw me into a slight fever, from which I had not fully recovered when we set sail down the river; and this circumstance, through the kindness of the owner of the boat, procured for me the indulgence mentioned above; yet I got perfectly well during the passage, and landed at Limestone,

free from any bodily complaint whatever, except that I felt wearied and sleepy.

"We staid ten days near Limestone, in the house of Alexander Hamilton, an old Scotch Seceder, from Haddington. We were yet seventy miles from the place of our destination, and wanted horses to carry us along. There is scarcely any such thing as horses to hire in this country; and, owing to the deepness of the roads, in some seasons, it is almost impossible to travel on foot. But here, as in every thing else, we experienced the kindness of Providence, and were agreeably extricated from this difficulty; for Mr. Hamilton gave us one horse, and a Roman Catholic, to whom we were introduced, gave us another for upwards of fifty miles; and, at the same time, a letter of introduction to a gentleman of the Baptist persuasion, with whom he was connected. From this gentleman's house we sent back our horses; and he showed his kindness by detaining us with him as long as he could, and then gave us horses to Canerun, where Mr. Goodlet resides.

"We had now finished our journey; but our difficulties seemed only to begin: for besides other discouraging circumstances, which it is not necessary to rehearse at present, as we hope they are in a great measure at an end, we scarcely knew of any in all this western part of the world, to take us by the hand or submit to our ministry. At first I regretted that one of us had not remained in Pennsylvania, where there was great need for him. But God, who often, for the accomplishment of his own gracious designs, works by such means, and in such a manner, as short-sighted mortals cannot understand, disappointed our fears; and we were soon convinced that the General Associate synod has been directed to the most proper measure in sending out two ministers. The hand of God in this matter was seen and acknowledged in different parts of the country: for, though our beginnings were small, a great door has been opened here for the preaching of the gospel; and there are petitions for sermon, which it is impossible for us to answer, to the satisfaction of the people; and though the people that submitted to our ministry at first, if they had all resided in our settlement, would have made but a small congregation, there is now every reason to think that those under our inspection would afford sufficient work for four ministers; two in Kentucky, and two in the state of Tennessee, which lies on the south-west of Kentucky. But it is necessary for me, in some measure, to account for this much unexpected change in our situation.

"With respect to Kentucky, our connexions were scat-

tered at a considerable distance from one another, in different parts of the state; of consequence, they were anxious to have sermon, at least occasionally, as near themselves as possible. Our preaching among them excited the attention of their neighbours in the different places, and many of them having heard, joined themselves unto us, and people have expressed their desire of being taken under our inspection, where at first neither our friend nor we had the smallest thought of such an event. One of our congregations is on the south side of the Kentucky river, in Shelby, and the adjacent country, near the falls of Ohio. The other is near Lexington. Each of these will form a charge sufficiently extensive for the labours of one pastor, and able to support him, so as to enable him to give himself wholly to the work of the ministry; and however negligent the members of some other societies may often be, in supporting their ministers, the people connected with us, I believe, will not be deficient, in this respect, according to their ability.

“ With respect to the state of Tennessee, what was said above is likewise applicable to it. A person was sent to us by some people in Cumberland county, in that state, desiring that one of us should visit them. Accordingly Mr. Fulton set out for that place in the month of June last; and, after remaining six or seven weeks, left them in as favourable a situation as could have been expected. During his stay, several expressed their desire of being admitted to communion with us, and he conversed with them, with this view, much to his satisfaction. This place is distant about two hundred miles from Lexington.

“ Several people in Blount county, in another part of the state of Tennessee, had for a long time been petitioning the presbytery of Pennsylvania for supply of sermon, but without success. As soon as our arrival in Kentucky was known among them, they sent off a commissioner with a petition, entreating that one of us should visit them also. As the circumstances were clamant, after detaining the man for a week or ten days, in order to make the necessary arrangements before my journey, I set out with him to Blount county. The distance is about 230 miles from Canerun, where I now write, and about 200 miles from Cumberland county, mentioned above. During the time of my residence among them, which was seven weeks, after conversing with a considerable number, they were constituted into a congregation, and five elders ordained among them. I there baptized thirty-two children in one day. About fifty families are either in full communion, or are considered as steady adherents, and are anxious for a minister. There can be no doubt of a minister's being

comfortable there; and I believe he would not be long settled, ere he had occasion for an assistant in some of the neighbouring counties.”\*

In a letter written by Mr. Armstrong (dated 5th June, 1799), giving an account of the prospects that were beginning to open upon the mission, after they had time to examine the state of the country, and complete their arrangements, he says,—“ Mr. Fulton and I have got the bounds of our habitation fixed. This was an extremely delicate business, but it has been effected apparently to the satisfaction of all parties. The nearest boundary of Mr. Fulton’s congregation is forty, and the most distant at least seventy miles from the place of my residence, which is eight miles from Lexington. My congregation is near the centre of the country, in one of the most fertile, thickest settled, and best cultivated parts of Kentucky, and where society is most improved. I have three places for public worship, each of which, by contract, is entitled to one-third of my public labours. Two of the three places where I preach, are eight miles apart, and the third is fifteen miles distant from each of the others. Two of these are sufficiently able to maintain me; the third could neither support a minister, nor obtain one if they could support him.

“ Considering the very discouraging prospect which, a little more than a year ago, presented itself to us in this country, we have abundant reason for gratitude and thanksgiving to God, who has so much disappointed our fears, and to such a degree made our way prosperous. Taking into account the infant state of this congregation, with which I am connected, the number of members belonging to it is considerable: several of them are men respectable for their situation in the world, as well as for their talents and piety. Several members of session are such as would fill that office with credit in any congregation in Britain,—a circumstance which gives me particular satisfaction; yet, till now, I never knew so well the labours, the disquietude, the vexation, and the grief attending the work of the ministry. For, though there are several sensible and religious people in my congregation, the stupid ignorance of some who put themselves under my inspection, and the careless indifference, or hardened insensibility of others, render it necessary for me to be instant ‘in season and out of season.’ While, on such occasions, I have endeavoured to impress the minds of individuals or families with a sense of the necessity and importance of religion, and of a due attention to the duties which belong to

\* Christian Magazine for 1799. Pp. 187, 188.


the Christian character, I have been left to weep over the insensibility of some who seemed to be callous against all convictions, and hardened in their disregard to the things of God, though they attend the public ordinances of the gospel; upon others, it is thought, some apparent impression has been made.

“The planting of churches is difficult and laborious work. The exercise of the ministerial office here would require, at the same time, invincible resolution, yet prudence, unwearied industry, and zealous activity in the service of Christ, with a disposition to become all things to all men, and a calmness of temper which can scarcely be ruffled. But who is sufficient for these things? For my own part, I am far, very far, from having great pretensions to these qualities. I have been sometimes obliged to put on a brow of brass, in my public ministrations, ‘to rebuke and exhort with all authority,’ and have succeeded so far, that the openly profane, who despise religion, are either driven away from our assemblies, or forced to behave in them with tolerable decency. It is a disagreeable situation for a minister to be under the necessity of addressing himself to an assembly, the greater part of which consists of declared infidels. In this situation, however, I have sometimes found myself placed. On such occasions, my fortitude has never forsaken me in so great a degree as I feared. What we have already been enabled to go through, and the countenance we have already received, affords us great reason to ‘thank God, and take courage.’ But notwithstanding or all that I have said, I sincerely declare to you that I do not repent my acceptance of a mission to Kentucky. I entertain no fears with regard to temporal support, and I have the prospect of being much more useful in promoting the general interests of the kingdom of Christ here, than I could have been in Scotland.

“We have two vacancies in the state of Tennessee. One of them I have not seen: the other, on several accounts, promises to be a charge perhaps more eligible than any under our inspection. Indeed Mr. Fulton and I have taken those stations which appear to be the most difficult, the most precarious, and the most liable to be injured by the want of ministers; leaving the rest, as better established, to depend upon our supplies, and to wait the arrival of other ministers. I mentioned my journey to Tennessee, in the letter already referred to; and, that you may understand my mode of journeying through the wilderness between this place and Tennessee, take the following account of it. Besides the ordinary necessities for travelling with you, I first take care to provide me in a large wallet, one end of which contains provision for

myself, the other for my horse: then I get what is here called an Indian blanket, the use of which I shall describe by and by: both of these are fixed on the horse along with the saddle-bags. Some of your nice high-minded Scotch ministers will now be ready to exclaim, 'What! travel in this mean plight! expose the gospel to contempt!' But stay a little. This is done by all classes of men in such a situation; and what is common, does not detract from any man's dignity. Well, but to proceed on my journey. You must now suppose me equipped as above, and moving along till I find a spring or a brook, when it is necessary to rest a little. Here, after my horse has begun feeding, I sit down under a tree, and finish my repast out of the wallet. Then I fix every thing, and remove. Having thus refreshed myself, at proper intervals, I come to a mean log cabin in the evening, where again I eat my supper out of the wallet. But there is no bed which I choose to occupy. I therefore throw my saddle-bags on the floor for a pillow; and, wrapping myself in the Indian blanket, I lie down to sleep with my feet to a great fire (if it is cold). Sometimes I get a bear's skin under me, and sometimes not. In this manner, I move on from Monday morning till Saturday night, for upwards of 200 miles, when I come to the end of my journey; all the while, though out, sometimes in snow, and sometimes in rain, I feel myself as hearty and well as ever I did in my life, and exposed to less danger of catching cold, than if I had reposed every night upon a bed of down.

"Three members of the congregation, about eighteen or twenty miles distant from Knoxville, the seat of government in Tennessee, who, at midnight, heard of my arrival there, on the evening of the preceding day, came to meet me in the morning; and I was not a little affected when the honest men told me, with tears, that, for more than ten years, they had been waiting and praying for such a day. A reception of this sort was surely the best encouragement I could have met with. In Blount county, the profession of religion is general. I heard no account of any open infidels. Here, there was no occasion to reprove my audience for their inattention or improper behaviour in the time of public worship. Here, too, I found several persons who had never before seen or heard a minister of our communion, whose religious principles were the same with mine. They had separated from the Presbyterian congregation in this place, because they could approve neither of the doctrine taught, nor of the mode of worship in that congregation. They joined themselves in praying societies, with some who had formerly been acquainted with the principles of the Secession; and, along with them,



waited for a minister, from whom they could receive the ordinances of the gospel. An extensive field for the propagation of the gospel presents itself in this country ; and I feel anxious, extremely anxious, that, if possible, a minister could be got for Tennessee.”\*

\* Christian Magazine for 1799. Pp. 559—562.

## CHAPTER XII.

Mr. William Hume sent to Kentucky—Great religious excitement in Kentucky—Different opinions concerning it—Presbytery of the Carolinas formed—Communications from Nova Scotia—Urgent request for more missionaries—Messrs. Francis Pringle, Alexander Dick, and Thomas M'Culloch missioned—Energy and zeal of Mr. M'Culloch—Pictou College founded—Mr. M'Culloch appointed president—Regulations of Synod respecting students of divinity—Regulations respecting the benevolent fund—Regulations respecting the support of a gospel ministry—Regulations respecting the appointments of preachers—Renewing of the covenants in 1805 by ministers and others—Engagement to duties—Proposal for a union betwixt the Burgher and Antiburgher parties in Ireland—Letter from the Burgher Synod in Ireland to their Antiburgher brethren—Terms of coalescence—Discussed in the Irish Provincial Synod—Not approved of—Union postponed.

WITH the view of reinforcing the mission in Kentucky, the synod appointed Mr. James Sinclair and Mr. William Hume to proceed to that destination. It was deemed proper afterward to release Mr. Sinclair from this appointment, in consequence of a call which he received from a congregation in Stronsay. As the claims of the Orkney Islands, in a religious point of view, were urgent, the synod yielded to the prayer of the people of Stronsay, and Mr. Sinclair was settled amongst them. Mr. Hume received ordination from the presbytery of Kirkcaldy, on the 5th of February, 1800, and arrived in Kentucky in the beginning of the following year. His arrival occasioned great joy to the brethren in that remote quarter, and to their people. After being employed, for a short period, preaching within the bounds of their congregations, he was sent to the state of Tennessee, to preach at Nashville, in Cumberland county, where he laboured for two months; and then to Blount county, about two hundred miles distant from Nashville, where he continued other two months. In the month of August, 1801, a call was presented to him from each of these places. Mr. Hume, being urged by the presbytery to make a choice, reluctantly gave the preference to Nashville; expressing, at the same time, his willingness to go to either of the places, or to labour at them by turns, till both could be provided with a minister. The presbytery thought that it would be hurtful to both congregations to keep them in suspense; and Messrs. Armstrong and Fulton met him at Nashville, and admitted him pastor of that congregation, on the 2d of December, 1801.

At the period of Mr Hume's arrival in Kentucky, that country was the scene of a singular religious movement, similar to what had taken place at Cambuslang, and in other parts of the west of Scotland, as described in a former part of this work; and good men in America were no less divided in opinion concerning the nature of it, than those in Scotland had formerly been concerning the "Cambuslang work." Some regarded it as an extraordinary work of the Spirit; others regarded it as a work of the devil, intended to delude the souls of men. The effects produced were certainly uncommon, and though there might be (as there is in almost all cases of the kind) much false excitement, yet there is reason to believe that much spiritual good was done. The following account, extracted from a letter sent home by one of the synod's missionaries in Kentucky, will convey some idea of the nature of the work. It may be premised, that both friends and foes agreed in giving the same statement of facts, though the conclusions which they deduced from them were widely different. Such extraordinary movements as the one here described, have generally been regarded with suspicion by the Seceders, from the period of the "Cambuslang work" downward; and it would appear, from the extract here inserted, that the members of the presbytery of Kentucky did not form an exception to the general rule. The letter is dated 5th March, 1802, and the writer says:—

"Last summer there appeared among the presbyterians a work still more astonishing, which drew away the attention from the Baptists, except their own connexions. This work seems to be of the same complexion with that which took place long ago at Cambuslang, in the west of Scotland, although differing, perhaps, in some particulars. It first made its appearance in the lower parts of this state, towards Cumberland, one hundred and fifty miles from this, about a year and a half ago. The news of an extraordinary revival of religion were spread over all this part of the country. It was much extolled by some, and a general expectation was formed, that the same would take place here; which accordingly was the case. It began, as I have been informed, in the congregation of a Mr. Stone, in the county of Bourbon, among some of his people, met in a praying society. Afterwards, at public worship, a kind of weakness and fainting came upon a number of them, and some of them fell down, which raised a considerable agitation among his people. This happened some short time before his sacrament. He sent word to some of the neighbouring ministers to come and see, and judge of a work he could not fully understand. A number of ministers went to assist at the sacrament. The report of it spread with rapidity; a great number of people collected, and a good many

of them were taken with these fainting fits. This was, if I recollect right, in the month of May last. Some of the ministers were said at first to be opposed to it, and wanted to discourage it; but after a little some of themselves were affected, and all of them, as far as I know, came by degrees to view it as a divine work.

“Other sacraments, in a few weeks, succeeded. The number of people that attended on these occasions increased, and the same ferment and fainting continued, till the months of July and August, when the collection of people at these sacraments was prodigious. At one of them, some supposed there were ten, others fifteen thousand. Such a number of people could not get lodging within any reasonable distance. Many, therefore, brought waggons and provisions alongst with them, and continued on the ground till all was over. These meetings began on the Friday, and sometimes they were not all dismissed till the Tuesday after. Some fell upon the fast-day (Friday), and on Saturday; but on the afternoon of Sabbath and Monday, the stir was greatest. It is said, that once or twice, upon the Monday, the people were in such an agitation, that the minister did not preach. Some were struck all at once, and fell down; others felt a weakness coming on, and sat down; others, when they felt themselves affected, attempted to leave the meeting, but had not gone far till they were obliged to yield. When one fell in the meeting, they carried him a little way off; a crowd collected around; one was employed in prayer,—a minister, if at hand, if not, any that pleased. If none were engaged in prayer or exhortation, the people that surrounded the one that was down, were singing hymns. When these exercises were going on, particularly in time of singing, others were struck down, which occasioned the formation of new parties. It is said that upwards of one hundred have been down at once. All kinds of persons have been affected, men, women, and children, professors of religion, and many who made no profession; even some deists, who went for their amusement, were struck down. One in particular, after he was recovered, acknowledged the wickedness of his former life, and exhorted others to repent of their sins, and to regard religion. Many others exhorted, in like manner, with uncommon eloquence. Children of ten or twelve years of age have fainted, and afterwards harangued about religion in a surprising manner. I suppose it is generally the case, that when the mind is much agitated, from whatever cause, words flow more copiously than usual, but often very incoherently.

“I am of opinion, that such an irregular, and so far as I

can judge, unscriptural manner of worshipping God, in public ordinances, ought neither to be encouraged nor countenanced. It has indeed been said, that this certainly is a work of the Spirit of God; for a visible reformation has taken place with many that have fallen. That some external reformation has taken place with many of them, I make no doubt, and perhaps some may be internally renewed. God may have taken occasion, from this great stir about religion, to make some careless sinners think seriously about their immortal souls, and may have, in a sovereign manner, communicated his grace. But it appears to me, that the tendency of this work upon the whole, is to entangle poor souls in delusion about their eternal concerns, and to lead them away from the scriptures, to make them slight a regular dispensation of ordinances, and look for extraordinary impulses of the Spirit without the word."

In reference to the congregations belonging to the presbytery of Kentucky, in connexion with the General Associate synod, the writer adds:—"Nothing of this kind has taken place amongst our people. We had the sacrament of the Supper dispensed last summer at Baregrass. On the fast-day before, a young man in the neighbourhood, who sometimes before attended our meeting, fainted in time of sermon, which occasioned some little disturbance; but the people carried him out of the meeting-house. He remained till sermon was over, and Mr. Armstrong conversed with him as to the cause of his trouble, but received no satisfaction. We are told he had frequently before this fallen down at the presbyterian meetings above mentioned; but he has never attended our sermons since."\*

Another writer, not connected with the presbytery of Kentucky, giving an account of these scenes, speaks more decidedly and in more favourable terms, concerning the spiritual effects produced by them. Having been present at several of the meetings, he states the result of his own observations:—"In October," he says, "I attended three sacraments: at each there were supposed to be four or five thousand people, and every thing was conducted with strict propriety. When persons fell, those who were near took care of them, and every thing continued quiet until the worship was concluded.

"At Cane Ridge sacrament, it is generally supposed that not less than one thousand persons fell prostrate to the ground, among whom were many infidels. At one sacrament which I attended, the number that fell was thought to be more than

\* Letter from Kentucky, in *Christian Magazine*, vol. vii. pp. 38, 39.

three hundred. Persons who fall are generally such as had manifested symptoms of the deepest impressions for some time previous to that event. It is common to see them shed tears plentifully for about an hour.

“Immediately before they became totally powerless, they are seized with a general tremor, and sometimes, though not often, they utter one or two piercing shrieks in the moment of falling. Persons in this situation are affected in different degrees; sometimes, when unable to stand or sit, they have the use of their hands, and can converse with perfect composure. In other cases they are unable to speak, the pulse becomes weak, and they draw a difficult breath about once in a minute; in some instances, their extremities become cold, and pulsation, breathing, and all the signs of life, forsake them for nearly an hour. Persons who have been in this situation, have uniformly avowed that they felt no bodily pain; that they had the entire use of their reason and reflection; and, when recovered, they could relate every thing that had been said or done near them, or which could possibly fall within their observation. From this it appears that their falling is neither common fainting, nor a nervous affection. Indeed, this strange phenomenon appears to have taken every possible turn to baffle the conjectures of those who are not willing to consider it as a supernatural work. Persons have sometimes fallen on their way from public worship, and sometimes after they had arrived at home, and, in some cases, when they were pursuing their common business on their farms, or when they retired for secret devotion. It was before observed, that persons are seriously affected, for some time previous to their falling; in many cases, however, it is otherwise. Numbers of thoughtless sinners have fallen as suddenly as if struck with lightning. Many professed infidels, and other vicious characters, have been arrested in this way, and sometimes at the very moment when they were uttering blasphemies against the work.

“At the beginning of the revival in Shelby county, the appearances, as related to me by eye-witnesses, were very surprising indeed. The revival had, before this, spread with irresistible power through the adjacent counties; and many of the pious had attended distant sacraments with great benefit. These were much engaged, and felt unusual freedom in their addresses at the throne of grace, for the outpouring of the divine Spirit at the approaching sacrament in Shelby. The sacrament came on in September. The people, as usual, met on Friday; but all were languid, and the exercises went on heavily. On Saturday and Sunday morning, it was no better: at length the communion service commenced; every thing was still lifeless. Whilst the minister of the place was speaking

at one of the tables, without any unusual animation, suddenly there were several shrieks from different parts of the assembly; instantly persons fell in every direction; the feelings of the pious were suddenly revived, and the work progressed with extraordinary power, till the conclusion of the solemnity. This phenomenon of falling is common to all ages, sexes, and characters; and when they fall, they are differently exercised. Some pious people have fallen, under a sense of ingratitude and hardness of heart; and others, under affecting manifestations of the love and goodness of God. Many thoughtless persons, under legal convictions, have obtained comfort before they arose. But perhaps the most numerous class consists of those who fall under distressing views of their guilt, who arise with the same fearful apprehensions, and continue in that state for some days, perhaps weeks, before they receive comfort.”\*

It will be seen, from one of the letters quoted above, that the brethren in Kentucky did not approve of such proceedings as those now narrated; instead of encouraging them, they rather checked any tendency to them in their congregations. They considered them as originating in a false excitement, and as fitted to bring discredit upon religion, by the extravagances connected with them. Though, however, no such scenes took place among their flocks, they were most laborious and faithful in preaching the gospel, throughout a wide extent of territory. Under their ministerial labours, their people grew in intelligence and piety; and if the synod could only have found a sufficient number of fellow-labourers, who were able and willing to undertake the work, soon would these western wildernesses have been made to blossom as the rose.

During the winter of 1802, Mr. Armstrong crossed to the western side of the Ohio, and preached for some time in what was called the North-Western territory, now the state of Ohio. The gospel thus penetrated far into the west, in connexion with the Secession. Two ministers in Carolina, belonging to the Associate Reformed synod, along with their congregations, joined the Associate Synod of America; and these, together with Mr. Cree, in Virginia, were at this period formed into a presbytery, under the designation of the Associate Presbytery of the Carolinas. In connexion with the synod, there were within the limits of the states, no fewer than twenty vacant congregations, almost all of which were capable of maintaining ministers in a comfortable condition. Some of them were highly respectable, in regard both to the number and character of their members. A few preachers.

\* Letter in the Evangelical Magazine, vol. x.

were licensed by the presbyteries in America; but they were by no means sufficient to supply the wants of the church in that quarter; and urgent applications were made to the synod at home.\*

Along with the communications from Kentucky, a letter was, at the same time, received from the brethren in Nova Scotia, giving an account of the state of matters in that quarter, and requesting, in strong terms, that the synod would send them a supply of preachers, as the fields around them were white for the harvest, and the labourers few in number. There were many in that region, who had long been without a dispensation of the gospel, and some of the young generation had never heard the joyful sound. The people had their eyes fixed on Scotland, as the quarter from whence they expected this inestimable boon to reach them; and some of them had been waiting for a number of years, expecting a favourable answer to petitions which they had formerly sent.

The brethren who occupied this outpost of the Secession Church, in connexion with the General Associate synod, were Messrs. Macgregor, Ross, and Brown; and the following extracts from their address will show the sad religious destitution of the settlements in their neighbourhood, and the earnest desire of the inhabitants to enjoy the benefits of a gospel ministry.

“ There are many people in this and the neighbouring provinces, who are now, and have for a long time been, without the gospel. Many of the young generation have never heard its joyful sound. There are many infant settlements so weak, that they cannot support a fixed dispensation thereof, who earnestly desire occasional supplies; many others are able and willing, but all their endeavours to obtain it have hitherto been in vain. You have some young men under your inspection, who might come over and preach to some of these people; and sure it is their duty to come. It is a most grievous thing to think of their perishing for lack of knowledge, while there is a possibility of giving them the means of knowledge. Every one ought to pity and help them to the utmost. We do what we can, but our labours cannot be much felt in such an extensive circle. There is a necessity for more hands to be employed in the work.

“ It is about ten years since the people of Amherst sent

\* It is worthy of being noted, as an instance of presbyterian zeal, in the performance of ministerial duty, that Mr. Hume of Nashville, in attending the meetings of his synod at Philadelphia, had to accomplish a journey (going and returning) of *two thousand miles*: He and his brethren in the presbytery undertook this long journey by turns; those who remained at home, supplied the pulpit of the brother who was absent on synodical duty.

you a petition for a minister. The subscribers were not numerous, but they were mostly men of sense and piety. It was the superior confidence they placed in you, that induced them to apply to you; and every year since, they expected an answer, though their hopes grew fainter the longer they waited. They gave a call to Mr. Brown, soon after his arrival in this province; and had he been left to his own choice, there is little reason to doubt that he would have preferred them to the people among whom the presbytery appointed him, though he was not dissatisfied with their appointment. Delay and disappointment discouraged them. Several of them sold their possessions, and removed to other places of the province, and to the United States, where they could find the gospel. Others are removed by death, so that few of the subscribers are now in Amherst. Those who have come in their places, especially the young generation, having little acquaintance with gospel doctrines, and being hopeless of any relief from you, have now bargained with a minister, whom chance threw in their way, and of which they may repent ere long. Amherst is grown a populous place, and had you sent a minister to it, it might now have been a flourishing congregation, whereas it has been ten years without the gospel, after applying to you for it, and they are perhaps badly provided for at last.

“About seven years ago, the people of Princetown, and Stanhope, and St. Peter's in the Island of St. John, applied to you for two ministers, and they have waited ever since with patience (or rather impatience), frequently inquiring if there was any hope of a speedy answer to their petitions. For a number of years, we returned for answer, that ministers might soon be expected; but we are ashamed to give them that answer any longer, and now we know not what to say. The people stand in need of the gospel almost as much as any people on the face of the earth; for, beside all other considerations, their being in an island prevents them from having so ready access to other means of knowledge, as if they were on the continent; and they are surrounded with papists, who have always one or more priests among them, who use all their dexterity in making converts, especially among the young generation. There are in the island St. John, eight or ten other settlements that would require supply of sermon, being yet so weak that they cannot support ministers for themselves. It is a great trial of patience to wait seven years for a minister, and to have an opportunity of hearing the gospel only for two or three Sabbaths during all that time. There are good Christians in the island St. John, who, in all probability, have not heard five sermons these twenty-five years; and probably

there are some there twenty-five years old, who never heard a sermon. Who would not compassionate this people? We hope two ministers would be very agreeably situated amongst them, and in a short time there would be a demand for a number more. We earnestly beseech the synod to consider the case of this island, and to send over two ministers to them as soon as possible.

"The people of Douglas, in this province, were the next to petition you for a minister. This congregation is very forward and eager to obtain the gospel, but withal impatient of delay; so that there is danger, as they are not sufficiently aware of the evil of error, that they will not wait so long as you would wish or expect; but, being wearied out, will apply to some other quarter for that help, which they will give over hoping for from you. A part of this congregation have an opportunity of hearing Mr. Brown occasionally, as there are but a few miles of water between them and his congregation; but this seems only to make them more eager to have a minister of their own. There is therefore special need for the synod to consider the case of this people, and grant their petition. Though the people of Miramichi, in New Brunswick, be last in their application, yet they themselves consider their case as so deplorable above others, especially on account of the breaking dispensations they have met with, that they are entitled to be first answered; and indeed it is hard to deny their claim.

"It is difficult to say which of these four places is most in need. But if the synod cannot supply them all at once, let some of them be supplied, and the rest as soon after as possible, if they will wait.

"The people of Cape Breton petitioned the session of Pictou, before our erection into a presbytery, to appoint their minister to pay them a visit, to preach the gospel to them, and to give them advice and direction how to obtain a minister for themselves. The petition was granted, but the visit could not be paid till August last; partly because so few of them were desirous of the gospel (the generality of them being lukewarm), that they could scarcely support it; and partly because there was no hope of getting their petition granted for a long time, through the lukewarmness of ministers to come out; and because so many other places were entitled to be supplied before them, they were advised to delay sending home their petition for some time. But had they a minister, there is no reason to doubt that he would soon form a congregation; for the gospel would be a new thing to them, and, through the divine blessing, would run as it did among the Gentiles at first. Were there a minister there, application would soon be made to him from Newfoundland and other places. In all

appearance, nothing but the want of ministers prevents the gospel from spreading rapidly through this province, New Brunswick, part of both the Canadas, Island St John, Cape Breton, Newfoundland, &c. Had ministers been forward to come to our assistance, since the first of us arrived here, the gospel would already have been spread considerably through these countries."

Upon receiving this address, the synod adopted immediate measures for sending out an additional supply of preachers to these destitute provinces. In the spring of 1799, Mr. Francis Pringle, who had been ordained at Gilnakirk in Ireland, gave in his demission of that charge, and the synod missioned him with a view to his settlement in the island of St. John's. He arrived at New York in the following season, on his way to Nova Scotia; and the presbytery of Pennsylvania being greatly in want of preachers, sent home a petition to the synod, requesting that Mr. Pringle, instead of proceeding to his original destination, might be permitted to labour within their bounds. The synod sent out word that it was their earnest wish that Mr. Pringle should proceed to Nova Scotia, but that, if circumstances rendered it impracticable for him to go thither, they would not stand in the way of his being detained by the presbytery. After repeated disappointments, occasioned by young men having expressed a willingness to undertake a mission to Nova Scotia, and then drawing back from their engagements, the synod sent out Mr. Alexander Dick. He arrived at Halifax in August, 1802; and soon after his arrival, he received a call from the inhabitants of the township of Douglas. On his way out he spent a few days at the Bay of Bulls in Newfoundland; where he found amongst the inhabitants a deplorable destitution of the means of grace. Writing to a friend, he says: "During my stay in Newfoundland, I made it my business to inquire about the state of religion, and found it in a very languishing condition. There is only one society in all this province that deserves to be called religious. About forty or fifty of the members reside in St John's. I had the satisfaction to get acquainted with one of the principal supporters of this little congregation; and if I may judge of the whole from this specimen, I must think well of them. I found him well informed, sound in the great doctrines of our holy religion, and pious and regular in his conversation. He was particularly well-acquainted with the Arminian controversy, and held the doctrines of that system in great abhorrence. The members of that society have frequent meetings for prayer and conference, beside their stated and ordinary meeting for public worship upon the Lord's day. They have lately received a minister from England of Lady Huntingdon's Methodists.

He is a man of considerable literature, and is a plain evangelical preacher, endeavouring to assist the hearts of his audience, while himself is an example in sobriety, faith, and purity. But the great body of inhabitants in this place are far from acting in any measure corresponding to these of this little society.

“—— How firmly is the kingdom of Satan established in the hearts of men, and how numerous and powerful are the supports of this kingdom in many places of the world, and especially in this bay! How affecting to see betwixt two and three hundred poor sinners amusing themselves in different kinds of sport upon the Lord's day, and no one to speak any thing to them about Christ and his salvation.

“—— At present I am in the township of Douglas, the inhabitants of which have given me a call. The congregation is upwards of forty miles in length, and my labours must be great. I have to preach in three different places; one half of my time in one of these, and the other half divided betwixt the other two. I do not intend, however, to take charge of the whole. The labour would be far more than what I am capable to endure. I intend taking charge of the one half, but to give as much supply to the other as I can overtake, till they are provided with a minister of their own. My trials for ordination are finished, and the ordination is to take place in the month of June. We have sent you an address and petition for further help in the work of the ministry; and I earnestly beg that every means may be employed for our speedy relief. There is nothing here to intimidate any person to come over and preach the gospel of Christ. I have seen the people, and they are kind and generous. I have travelled through part of the country, and the roads are much better than I expected. I have felt the heat, and it is agreeable. I have been upon the sea, and have suffered no shipwrecks. I have likewise seen the greatest part of the winter, and can say, that the cold is not intolerable. But instead of any thing to intimidate, there is much to invite ministers of the gospel to this quarter of the world. Multitudes are crying for relief; they would set their faces heavenward, but have no minister to point out the way thither. Two ministers are needed for St. John's, one for Amherst, and one for this part of the country, and several more for other parts with which I am unacquainted. How distressing is the case of the presbytery, when petitions are laid before them, and they are obliged to tell the petitioners, some of whom have come from great distances, that they can give them no supply of sermon *this year!*”

The arrival of Mr. Dick in Nova Scotia occasioned great joy to the brethren in that presbytery. The hopes of the

people were excited, that a fresh supply of preachers was about to follow. Soon after his arrival, the presbytery agreed to renew their application to the synod for more labourers to be sent out. An address, drawn up in eloquent language, and subscribed by all the brethren, was forwarded to this country. As the synod found considerable difficulty in inducing their preachers, at that period, to undertake missions across the Atlantic, the address from the presbytery of Nova Scotia contained the following powerful appeal on this subject. It deserves a place in this record, both because it shows the excellent spirit which animated these good men in their missionary labours, and because the perusal of it is well fitted to excite ministers and preachers, in the present day, to devote themselves to a similar work :—

“ We have more reason than ever to say, ‘ The harvest is great, but the labourers are few.’ Though we are thankful for the coming of Mr. Dick, we are sorry that he had to come alone. We cannot help expressing our sincerest grief at the continued backwardness of young preachers to come out to this country. There are four petitions from this neighbourhood, lying before you, for seven years, and some of them much more, still unanswered. How many of the young generation are growing up in these congregations, without God, without Christ, without hope, insensible of their sin or danger, who might, if they were under the charge of faithful ministers, be an ornament to the gospel profession ! How many souls in these congregations have died, perhaps perished, in this long interval, looking to you and to the young preachers under your inspection, for the means of life ! Unheard, unheeded, they have been crying at this time, ‘ Help, we perish ! We have heard of you, that you are zealous for the glory of God, and the honour of the Mediator, and the salvation of your fellow-creatures, even of our souls. We have heard, that you are peculiarly careful to teach the pure and simple truths of the gospel, and to guard against the various errors which false teachers and corrupt nature embrace instead of the truth ; and to lead perishing souls, in the most direct manner, to Jesus the Saviour. We are without the means of grace. We have no ministers, few books, little knowledge. Unlearned and unordained men sometimes offer their assistance to teach us ; but we think, we may as well offer to teach them, though we cannot discern between right and wrong, good and evil. Providence has directed us to you. Therefore, to you we have applied. Under God, we have committed our souls to your charge. Send us speedy help. Let the zeal, which we hear abounds in you, move you to compassion for our destitute souls. Turn not a deaf ear to our

cry. Or, if you cannot help us, tell us whither to apply.' Such has been the cry of these people, and we are persuaded that it would have been answered long ago, if the young preachers under your inspection had either the spirit of Isaiah ('Here am I, send me'), or the zeal of Roman Catholic priests; for permit us to tell you, that the papists in this part of the world can more easily get out priests, than we ministers. The papists here are few compared to the protestants, and they are not so destitute of instructors, for they have more priests by far in proportion to their number; yet two priests arrived here from Scotland this season, to propagate the Romish faith, and but one protestant clergyman.

"—— Reverend fathers and brethren, it is irksome for us to dwell on such points as the removing of difficulties, and the using of arguments to make ministers and preachers, called to serve Christ in a foreign country, to obey their Master's voice; for what else are we doing but reproaching them? Is it not the greatest honour, as soon as they know the Master wants their service, to need no argument, to fear no danger, to brave every difficulty, cheerfully to deny themselves, take up the cross, and follow him whithersoever he calls? Is it possible that Christ's ministers can expect to grow in grace, to advance in communion with God, or any solid good, by shutting their eyes upon the proper work, or neglecting it when seen? When ministers or preachers choose not to discern the Lord's call, and to know his voice as directed to them, they are fleeing from the presence of the Lord as really as Jonah did. But in vain do they hide themselves from him, whose eyes are as a flame of fire. Most foolish and delusive are all their artifices to elude his call, who searches the heart, and to whom all things are naked and open. The various calls that have been sent from this quarter to you, the Lord has directed, and does direct, to some individual, preachers or ministers, under your inspection, and in whatsoever place or corner within your bounds they may be, there the Lord sees them, and thence he orders them. If they neglect to know (for by fair inquiry they may know) themselves pitched upon by him, or if they do not obey, he will not hold them guiltless. Assuredly the sovereign Judge will charge them with the blood of souls, and no assiduity elsewhere will justify them from this awful charge. They are guilty of the blood of souls, and that with high aggravation, for they injure not merely those few congregations who have already addressed you, but others which would have been ere now, and perhaps hundreds more, which might in a few years to come, be formed round them; and who knows to how many generations the injury may extend? It is no small aggravation of their crime, that they

decline an invitation to no very great distance from a civilized people partly their own countrymen ; while others fear not to go, uninvited, to savage people, to heathen nations, to the utmost ends of the earth. Would such ministers or preachers reflect but for a moment what must be our present feelings for the disappointed vacancies, we think they could not escape the pangs of self-condemnation. Formerly when we met in presbytery, or went our rounds to give supply, the vacancies nearest us requested as much supply as possible ; and those at a distance, that we would visit them next year. This we, as far as possible, complied with, and granted their request. But now, on the coming of Mr. Dick, the hopes of all are raised ; many look for a fixed ministry, but it can be granted only to one ; and so we must see the tears of the disappointed, and hear the sighs of the needy. Your land was lately visited with scarcity of bread ; many had large families, and but little to give them. Imagine you see one such large family almost famished ; the anxious parent brings home the scanty portion he could provide. How wishfully do his dear babes look ! each could take the whole. With what anguish must he say to some, ‘ Here is bread, but not for you.’ Such must be our feelings, and such our language, to many who have waited long.

“ — Reverend fathers and brethren, it may be proper to enlarge your own views of this work. You have seen our part of the world only upon a map ; where a large country will appear as nothing. Had you no other acquaintance with Great Britain, your ideas of it would be indeed diminutive ; you would find it hard to believe that a famous church could ever be there. Perhaps you would see many things more necessary than to send ministers thither from a distance, and at considerable expense. So you may think with regard to us. But were you to travel through the British provinces here, and see the thousands of souls that are scattered through the woods, destitute of spiritual provision, without knowledge, and without means of knowledge, how would your hearts yearn upon them ! How feelingly would you bewail their forlorn condition ! Turning your mind to your native country, you could not help exclaiming : ‘ O Scotland ! overcharged with ministers ! surfeited with preaching ! What hast thou to account for ! Would that the half of thy gospel ministers were transported, and planted in the wilderness ! Then it would rejoice and blossom as the rose.’ You would not then wonder at our importunity. You would see the propriety of acting with energy and despatch in this great work. Be not discouraged at its greatness. Go on in the strength of the Lord. You know that it is nothing for him to do great things

by small instruments, and to accomplish very great designs from very small beginnings."

The General Synod at home felt a deep interest in the success of their transatlantic missions. When they met in August 1803, a proposal was made that a committee be appointed to visit the Divinity Hall, then holding its sittings at Whitburn, and converse with the students, with a view to obtain missionaries for America. This proposal it was not deemed expedient to adopt; but the synod appointed a committee to converse on the subject with such of the preachers as were present; and some of the young men, who had completed their course of study, were enjoined to be licensed, by their respective presbyteries, with a special view to this object. The synod further gave it as their judgment, that Mr. Murray, minister at Johnshaven, should submit to a missionary appointment, with a view to his labouring in the United States. As Mr. Murray was not present, notice was sent to him of this appointment, and he was required to return an answer before the synod concluded its present meeting. Mr. Murray, in his answer, declared that the infirm state of his constitution presented an insuperable obstacle to his undertaking such a mission.

Mr. Thomas M'Culloch, who had been for some time ordained at Stewarton, in Ayrshire, resigned into the hands of the presbytery his charge of that congregation, and embarked for Nova Scotia, that he might take part in the ministry, along with the Secession brethren who were labouring in that distant province. He arrived with his family at Pictou, in the beginning of November, 1803; and, in the month of June the following year, he was admitted by the presbytery of Nova Scotia, to the pastoral inspection of the Associate congregation of the Harbour of Pictou. The energy, zeal, and varied literary attainments of this individual, peculiarly qualified him for the work in which he engaged. His arrival occasioned great joy to the church in that quarter: and the result has shown that the expectations which his coming excited, were not ill founded; for, by his unwearied and diversified labours, he has promoted, in an eminent degree, both the literary and the religious interests of that province. Soon after his settlement in Nova Scotia, Mr. M'Culloch suggested to his brethren the idea of forming an academical institution, in which young men might be trained for the ministry, or educated for any of the learned professions; and a considerable sum was subscribed by the people of Pictou, to carry the project into effect. In a letter written by Mr. M'Gregor, of Pictou, two years after Mr. M'Culloch's arrival, referring to this proposal of erecting an academy, he says, "The increas-

ing demand for ministers seems to intimate the necessity of raising them in this country. The great expense of every thing here, renders this undertaking next to hopeless in our circumstances; yet Mr. M'Culloch, who started the idea, has sanguine hopes. Pictou people have subscribed about £1,000, a more liberal subscription than they are well able to pay. We expect some money from the province-treasury, if we give our seminary a little name, as not rivalling the university which government has established. We expect great assistance from Britain and Ireland. We intend to send Mr. M'Culloch home to beg. I fear that it will produce few ministers in my day; but I do not think it improper to make a beginning, for it is highly probable that it will succeed by degrees, and be very beneficial to posterity."

Unforeseen difficulties prevented this excellent scheme from being accomplished at the time it was originally proposed. But, after a delay of several years, the project was again revived. Subscriptions were procured, and the Pictou college was erected, for which a charter was obtained from the legislature, in 1816, and a small annual sum (£400) was given out of the public treasury for its support. The reputation which Mr. M'Culloch had acquired in the province from his literary attainments, pointed him out as an individual every way qualified to undertake the superintendence of such an institution; and he was solicited by the trustees to become its president. To his indefatigable zeal and persevering efforts, this institution has been indebted for no small share of its success.

While the General Associate synod were thus actively engaged in extending the boundaries of the Redeemer's kingdom, by means of their missionaries abroad,\* they were no less usefully employed in promoting the interests of religion and of literature at home. Various measures were adopted by them, which were well-calculated to render their existing institutions both more efficient and more permanent. The education of the young men who were designed for the office of the ministry, had ever been regarded by them as an object of great importance; and, from time to time, committees were appointed to consider what improvements might be made in the course of study, or to suggest such regulations as might be necessary to secure the full benefit of the course already pursued. In

\* The exertions of the synod were responded to, in a very liberal and public spirited manner, by the people under their charge. More than £1,000 was collected by them in one year, to defray the expenses of foreign missions, and also to assist weak congregations. This was a large sum, when we consider the humble circumstances of the mass of the people, and the money which they contributed annually for the support of gospel ordinances amongst themselves.—See *Christian Magazine*, vol. ii. new series, p. 123.

October 1801, the following regulations on this subject were adopted:—

1. That young men intended for the ministry shall be examined with regard to their proficiency in the Latin language, at the time of their going to college, by the presbytery in whose bounds they reside.

2. The presbyteries shall give them directions as to the classes which it may be proper for them to attend every session, and the books which it is proper for them to read, on those branches of learning in which they are engaged.

3. The synod shall every year appoint either a committee or presbyteries to examine students in philosophy, who shall receive none to examination but such as come attested by their ministers, as in full communion; and the synod shall charge the presbyteries or committee to examine, with the utmost diligence and care, those who appear before them, and to have their eye particularly on those dangerous opinions which are taught in our universities.

4. That no one shall be attested for examination by a committee, unless he has been previously examined by the presbytery in whose bounds he resides, in Latin and Greek, and his progress in these languages has been included in the attestation. If any presbytery examine for admission to the Divinity Hall, the first part of their examination shall be on the languages above-mentioned, if they have not previously given satisfaction.

5. That the Divinity Hall meet every year on the third Wednesday of August, and hold its sittings at least eight weeks; and that students in divinity shall be required to attend, at least five weeks every Session, unless they can give to the ministers of presbytery a sufficient excuse, otherwise their attendance shall not be reckoned regular and sufficient, unless they make up the deficiency in future sessions.

6. Students of divinity shall be required to deliver at least one discourse every year before the presbytery; and presbyteries shall be in readiness to report to the synod, when required.

7. Presbyteries shall use their best endeavour to recommend to students the reading of proper books in divinity, and shall frequently examine them on these books.

8. The General Synod shall require from their presbyteries, every year, an account of their diligence in observing these regulations.

The synod next turned its attention to the state of its funds. There were three objects to which the funds of the association were applied; these were, defraying the current expenses of the synod, the support of foreign missions, and giving aid to such

ministers' widows as might be in indigent circumstances. In order that the supplies given into their treasury, for these important purposes, might be regular and permanent, the following regulations were adopted in May 1805 :—

1. That the fund for defraying the current expense of the synod, shall be distinct from the fund for foreign missions, and also from the widows' fund.

2. That for the synod's fund there shall be an annual collection, in each congregation, under the inspection of the synod, in Scotland and England. Congregations in a vacant state not to be excepted.

3. That if this collection shall be omitted, or in case of delay, the presbytery in the bounds shall deal with the session, and report their diligence to the first ensuing meeting of the General Synod.

4. That sessions be at liberty to deduct the ordinary day's collection; but the surplus shall be remitted to the presbytery collector, to be by him transmitted to the treasurer of the synod, accompanied with a written note, bearing that the sum specified is the whole amount of the collection for the synod's fund for that year; and this note shall be signed by the moderator or session-clerk.

5. That each session shall be furnished with a printed annual report of the state of this fund, signed by the treasurer of the synod, wherein the particular sums received from each congregation shall be specified; likewise the different disbursements, and the purposes for which these disbursements were made; and, in case of any legacy or donation bequeathed to the use of the fund, this also shall be mentioned in the report.

6. That sessions shall be furnished with a printed copy of the above regulations, accompanied with an intimation, that the first annual report will be made as soon after next meeting of the General Synod, in the ensuing year, as the treasurer's accounts can be made out.

7. That the transmission of the above regulations to sessions, shall be accompanied with an address to the Christian people, stating some of those important purposes to which the synod's fund is subservient, and urging liberality in contribution, according to their circumstances.

A committee was appointed to prepare an address to be sent to each congregation, along with a copy of these regulations. At the same meeting, the synod took into consideration the maintenance of the gospel ministry; and, in order to remind congregations of the obligations under which they lay to attend to this duty, and also to furnish a directory to presbyteries, in the granting of a moderation to any congregation that might

apply for it, they enacted the following regulations on this subject:—

1. With reference to vacant congregations, or those who apply for a second minister: That presbyteries be enjoined not to grant a moderation, until they be fully satisfied that the sum offered by such congregations, in name of stipend, is adequate to the decent and comfortable subsistence of a minister, all circumstances considered; as well as that they are able to fulfil their engagements; and, further, that (unless in very extraordinary cases, which evidently appear to justify a deviation from the general rule) £80 per annum, and a house, be the lowest; provided always, that this shall be understood as referring to weak congregations in the country, and not forming the standard for others who are strong, and might do more.

2. That an inquiry be forthwith instituted by each presbytery, into the manner in which the several ministers within their bounds are supported: and, for this purpose, that the members of each session be required to send a written report to the first meeting of their presbytery after Whitsunday every year; and, for this year, that each presbytery, before Martinmas first, shall send a requisition to the elders of each session under their inspection, to transmit such statement to the next meeting of that presbytery.

3. That if the members of any session neglect or refuse to do so, this deficiency shall be marked, in order that the synod may, in due time, be apprized of it; only the members of that session shall be allowed to supply the omission afterwards, which shall also be notified.

4. That presbyteries be enjoined to deal with such congregations as appear to be deficient in their duty of supporting the gospel, in proportion to their ability; and that they be always in readiness to give in a report of the result of their inquiry to the next meeting of the General Synod, if required.

A copy of this enactment was ordered to be sent to each session, and a committee was appointed to prepare an address upon the subject, copies of which were also to be circulated among the congregations.

To secure regularity in preachers fulfilling their appointments, and to prevent any disorders that might arise from ordained ministers resigning their charge, on insufficient grounds, and attempting to thrust themselves, in an irregular way, upon other congregations, the synod further adopted, at this meeting, the following resolutions, in reference to ministers and preachers, and ordered them to be printed:—

1. That no minister shall be loosed from his congregation, by a presbytery, unless the case be very clear, according to

the stated rules of the church ; and when the presbytery are much divided in sentiment, or the cause appears difficult, he shall not be loosed without taking the advice of the provincial synod of the bounds, or of the General Synod, if it shall meet first : And when such a cause comes before a provincial synod, unless there be a considerable degree of harmony in their sentiments, the business shall be referred to the General Synod.

2. That no minister who may be loosed from his charge, shall be employed in the bounds of other presbyteries, without the consent of, and a regular attestation from, the presbytery or provincial synod by which he was loosed.

3. That no preacher, who may receive a call to any congregation, shall be detained in the presbytery of the bounds, or called away from another presbytery, but in the way of one being provided in his place.

4. That no preacher shall, without leave asked and granted, remove from the presbytery where he is stationed ; and if he neglect to fulfil his appointments, he shall not be employed by any minister or presbytery, till he hath given satisfaction to the presbytery where the offence was committed, or to the presbytery into whose bounds he removes, in consequence of the business being regularly transmitted to them by the other presbytery.

5. That in all ordinary cases, the synod shall endeavour so to regulate the appointments of preachers, that there shall be no difficulty in fulfilling them.

6. That the regulations as to the appointment of the preachers, shall be finally settled before the last sederunt of their meeting, unless some weighty reasons be given to the contrary.

By a law of the synod,\* students of divinity were required “to join in the bond” for renewing the covenants, previous to receiving licence. The operation of this law had been suspended, since the year 1798, in consequence of the synod being engaged in preparing a new Testimony, and in revising their official documents. This business, which had occupied their attention at successive meetings, was now completed ; and all those ministers and preachers who had been ordained or licensed since 1798, were required to join in the renewing of the covenants, in the presence of the synod. The day on which this ceremony was appointed to take place was Thursday, the 2d of May, 1805, during the time that the synod was holding its ordinary meeting at Edinburgh. Students, elders, and such of the people as might be desirous to join in the bond,

\* See p. 294.

were called upon to come forward and co-operate with their brethren in this solemn work. Twenty ministers, nine preachers, eighteen students, and a number of elders connected with different congregations, gave in their names as willing to covenant.

Mr. James Robertson, minister at Kilmarnock, commenced the services of the day by preaching a sermon from Rev. xiv. 1, "And I looked, and lo, a Lamb stood on the mount Zion, and with him an hundred forty and four thousand, having his Father's name written in their foreheads." Several ministers then read in succession, with a short prayer in the intervals, the *Acknowledgment of Sins*, *Profession of Faith*, and *Engagement to Duties*, all of which had been previously reviewed and sanctioned by the synod. A solemn confession of sins was then made, by one of the ministers, in a direct address to the throne of grace. After this, the covenanting ministers, preachers, students, and elders, lifted up their right hand, and, in presence of the synod and of a crowded audience, solemnly swore, steadfastly to adhere to the *Profession of Faith* and *Engagement of Duties*, which had been read in their hearing. In making this solemn declaration, they were joined by a considerable number of people connected with the Secession in Edinburgh. An opportunity was also given to those who had formerly covenanted, to signify their adherence to their former deed, and to testify their cordial approbation of what had been done in their presence; which testimony was cheerfully given, by their holding up their right hand, at the close of the ceremony. The bond was then subscribed by the covenanters, in presence of the synod and the congregation; and during the time of subscription, suitable addresses were delivered by several of the ministers. The services of the forenoon were concluded with prayer and praise. In the afternoon, Mr. Alexander Pringle, minister at Perth, preached a sermon suited to the occasion, from Psalm cxix. 106, "I have sworn, and I will perform, that I will keep thy righteous judgments."

As many of the persons who engaged in the transactions of that day are still living, and as some of them are taking a prominent part in the Voluntary Church Controversy, at present carrying on in this country, I deem it proper to introduce into this narrative the "bond" which they swore and subscribed. This I do for the purpose of showing that the bond in which they joined, was of a different complexion from that which our forefathers swore, when they subscribed the *National Covenant* and the *Solemn League and Covenant*, being more accordant both with reason and scripture than either of these bonds; and that, so far from its being opposed to Voluntary Church principles, there is not a single sentence in it, that does not

strictly harmonize with these principles. So desirous were the synod to guard against any misinterpretation of their views, as if by "renewing the covenants" they were to be understood as giving any countenance to the intolerant principles of those who subscribed the *National Covenant* and the *Solemn League and Covenant*, that they introduced into their new Testimony the following passage, utterly disclaiming all methods of promoting religion, that were inconsistent with due freedom of conscience :—" Whatever means any person, either in former or present times, might think themselves bound by the covenant to employ, for the extirpation of these evils (viz. popery, prelacy, superstition, heresy, and schism), yet we, in adhering to the religious reformation engaged to in this covenant, utterly disclaim all obligation to use any methods inconsistent with liberty of conscience, in prosecuting the ends of it." And, as if this declaration were not sufficient, they afterwards introduced in a note appended to the Acknowledgment of Sins, a similar disclaimer in the following words :—" The synod, in adhering to the religious reformation engaged to in the Covenants, National and Solemn League, utterly disclaim all obligation to use any methods inconsistent with due liberty of conscience, in prosecuting the ends of it."\*

After acknowledging their own sins, and the prevailing sins of the land, they solemnly swore and then subscribed the following declaration, which is entitled, a *Profession of Faith, and Engagement to Duties* :—" Wherefore, seeing it is our duty, as a sinning people, not only to confess our iniquities, and be humbled for them, but also, by faith, to take hold of God's covenant of grace, revealed to us in the gospel, avouching the Lord to be our God, according to the tenor of this covenant, devoting ourselves to him as his people, and returning to him from whom we have revolted: and as it is our duty, in the faith of his free mercy through Jesus Christ, and trusting in him for the grace and strength which are promised in his covenant, to engage unto, and pursue after, reformation and the advancement of his kingdom, which is not of this world; convinced also in our minds, and confessing with our mouths, that, as by the word of God, so also by the covenants of our ancestors, the present and succeeding generations in these lands are bound firmly and constantly to adhere to the doctrine, worship, presbyterial church government, and discipline of the house of God, as contained in the Holy Scriptures, and summed up in our subordinate standards: Therefore,

\* Narrative and Testimony adopted by the Synod, May, 1804. Pp. 159 and 219.

in obedience to the command of God, conformably to the practice of the godly in former times, and according to the laudable example of our worthy and religious progenitors, in the fore-said covenants.

“ We all, and every one of us, though sensible of the deceitfulness and unbelief of our own hearts, and frequently perplexed with doubts and fears about our actual believing, yet desiring, in the Lord’s strength, to glorify him, by believing his word of grace, contained in his covenant of promise, and, in the faith of his promise, to devote ourselves to the Lord as his people : **WE DO**, with our hands lifted up to **THE MOST HIGH GOD**, hereby profess, and, before God, angels, and men, solemnly declare, that through the grace of God, and according to the measure of his grace given unto us, we desire to take hold, with our whole hearts, of our Lord Jesus Christ, as the only propitiation for our sins ; of his *righteousness*, as the only foundation of our access to God, and acceptance with him ; of his *covenant* of rich and free promises, as our only charter for the heavenly inheritance ; of his *word*, as our perfect and only rule of faith and practice, to which nothing is, at any time, to be added, either by new revelations of the Spirit, or traditions of men ; and of his *Spirit*, as our only guide, to lead us into all truth, and keep us in the way of God’s commandments. We avouch the Lord to be our God ; and, in the strength of his grace, we promise and swear, by the **GREAT NAME OF THE LORD OUR GOD**, that we shall walk in his way, keep his commandments, and hearken to his voice ; and, particularly, that we shall, by the grace of God, continue and abide in the profession, faith, and obedience of the true reformed religion, in doctrine, worship, presbyterial church-government, and discipline ; and that we shall, in our several stations, places, and callings, and according to the measure of our knowledge, contend and testify against all contrary evils, errors, and corruptions, particularly those mentioned in the preceding Acknowledgment of Sins.

“ In like manner, we promise and swear, that, by all means which are lawful and warrantable for us, according to the word of God, the received and approved standards of this church, and our known principles, we shall, in our several stations and callings, and according to our opportunities in providence, endeavour the reformation of religion, in Britain and Ireland, in doctrine, worship, discipline, and government, according to the word of God ; and to promote and advance our covenanted conjunction and uniformity in religion, Confession of Faith, and Catechisms, Form of Church-government, and Directory for Worship, as these are received by the Secession

Church :\* We likewise engage, by all lawful means, and according as a door may be opened to us in providence, to promote the genuine interests of the kingdom of Christ in every other part of the world.

“ And, in regard we are taught by the word of God, and bound by our Covenants, National and Solemn League, to live together in the fear of God, and in love one to another, and to encourage one another in the work and cause of God ; and that, denying all ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world : Therefore, in a dependence upon the Lord’s grace and strength, we do, in the same manner, promise and swear, that we shall, in our several places and callings, encourage and strengthen one another’s hands, in pursuing the end and design of this our solemn oath and covenant ; that we shall endeavour a life and conversation becoming the gospel of Christ ; that, in our personal callings, and particular families, we shall study to be good examples to one another, of all godliness and righteousness, and of every duty that we owe to God and man ; that we shall not give ourselves up to a detestable indifference and neutrality in the cause of God ; but, denying ourselves and our own things, we shall, above all things, seek the honour of God, the advancement of his cause, and the good of his people ; and that, through grace, forsaking the counsels of flesh and blood, and not leaning on carnal confidences, we shall endeavour to depend upon the Lord, to walk by the rule of his word, and to hearken to his voice in the dispensation of the gospel. In all which, professing our own weakness, we earnestly pray to God, who is the Father of Mercies, that he may be merciful to us, through his Son Jesus Christ, and enable us, by the power of his Holy Spirit, to do our duty, to the praise of his grace in the churches. Amen.”†

Such was the bond, or *Engagement*, to which a solemn adherence was pledged on the above occasion. With the ex-

\* In a note appended to the Acknowledgment of Sins, the synod make the following declaration, explanatory of the sense in which certain parts of these subordinate standards were received by them, as a church :—“ Though the synod hereby declare their approbation of the presbyterial government of the church, which is materially contained in the tract compiled by the Westminster Assembly, commonly called *The Form of Church Government*, yet they are not to be considered as adopting every thing in that tract, as absolutely necessary to presbyterial government.

“ And in mentioning the Directory for Public Worship, the synod only mean, that they consider that little book as adapted to give direction in the worship of God ; but they do not bind themselves to use that book as a liturgy, or always to follow it in every article : And this is all the use that was intended to be made of it by the Assembly who composed it.”—*Narrative and Testimony*, p. 219.

† *Narrative and Testimony*, pp. 245—248.

ception of the particular speciality, relating to the presbyterian form of church government, there is not a single sentiment in it, to which an humble and sincere Christian might not at any time cordially subscribe. Nay, the sentiments, which the Engagement contains, are those which Christians ought, at all times, openly to avow; and they do virtually make a public profession of them, when they join in the fellowship of the church; and this profession which they make may be considered by some as rendering unnecessary such a public exhibition as the one above described.

At this period, a movement was made among the Seceders connected with the Burgher and Anti-Burgher synods in Ireland, to effect a union. An aggregate meeting was held, for this purpose, at Lurgan, in the month of March, 1805, where certain propositions were agreed upon, as the basis of a coalescence. When the General Associate synod met in May, the same year, though no official intelligence had been received by them, concerning the proposed union, yet they considered it proper to take the matter into consideration; and a committee was appointed to prepare a statement, explanatory of the synod's views on this subject. The following paper, drawn up by the committee, was approved of by the synod, and ordered to be transmitted to the brethren in Ireland:—"The synod having learned, by common report, by the public papers, and by some of their own members, who were lately in that country, that a coalescence has been proposed betwixt the two bodies of Seceders in Ireland; and having had two propositions laid before them, said to have been generally agreed to, in a conjoint meeting held at Lurgan, in the month of March last, containing the terms upon which they propose to coalesce; and the synod, finding that they had not time at present to enter on any particular consideration of said propositions, have judged it their duty to suggest to their brethren the few following things, which deserve their serious consideration.

"That the first of these propositions is expressed in such a general and indefinite manner, as renders it uncertain what reformation principles are precisely intended; and contains a very unlimited approbation of the public papers exhibited by the Secession Church, before the breach in the Associate synod; a formal approbation of some of which was never expressly required in Scotland, and which, we apprehend, are neither generally known nor read by Seceders in Ireland.

"And that the second of these propositions, as it was presented by the committee, properly speaking, neither explicitly affirms nor denies any thing. As the maintenance of the true religion, either absolutely considered, or as exhibited in the Westminster Confession of Faith, as that was received by

the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland, anno 1647, was never the subject of disputation in the controversy about the lawfulness or unlawfulness of the burgess-oath. The matter in question was concerning what was called the true religion, as it was then professed and authorized by the laws of the land, which was the description which the foresaid oath gave of the true religion. The synod are particularly surprised, that ever that disorderly and offensive resolution, concerning the decision of synod being a term of communion, or not, which was the immediate cause of the breach, should have been introduced into a country, where, we are carefully told, that the burgess-oath is a nonentity. And they cannot understand how moral good and evil should be bounded by mountains, rivers, or firths.

"The synod do not think that there is any particular necessity for requiring a positive condemnation of said oath in Ireland, if there was not an allowance of the lawfulness of it, and a virtual opposition to the sentence of synod, in the condemnation of it."

This paper was laid before the provincial synod of Ireland, at a meeting held at Belfast, on the 16th of July, 1805; and the following communication was, at the same time, presented from their brethren, belonging to the Burgher Associate synod in Ireland, dated Cookstown, June 19, 1805:—

"Rev. and Dear Brother,—We write to let you know, that we have received the propositions which were adopted by the aggregate meeting at Lurgan; and with very little alterations approved of them, as the enclosed minute will show. We hope they will meet with your acceptance likewise, and that you will take the necessary steps to effect the proposed coalescence. We are sorry that we had not the pleasure of seeing some of your members at our meeting in Cookstown, but trust that the day is not very distant, when we shall always meet you on such occasions. Wishing you divine direction in your proceedings, and an abundant blessing on your ministrations, we remain, your affectionate brethren in the Lord Jesus. Extracted by

"JOHN ROGERS."

The following is the minute, referred to in the above letter, containing a copy of the two propositions, which had been agreed on, by the Burgher synod in Ireland, as intended to form the basis of the proposed union:—

"Proposition I. That the *status ante litem*, or the state of the Secession Church immediately before the controversy about the burgess-oath, is a proper ground of coalescence; and that we declare our adherence to the covenanted principles of uniformity, contained in the Confession of Faith, Catechisms Larger and Shorter, Directory for Worship and Presbyterian Government, agreeable unto and founded on the word of God: That we declare our approbation of the Act and Testimony emitted by the Associate Presbytery, in 1736, of the Declinature, Act for the Doctrine of Grace, Act for renew-

ing the Covenants, and Answers by the said Presbytery to the Reasons of Dissent by Mr. Nairn.

“ Proposition II. The Associate synod of Ireland determined by a vote to substitute the following proposition in the room of the article transmitted to them by the committee. That with respect to the religious clause in some burgess-oaths in Scotland, we do not conceive it necessary either to approve or disapprove; and we are of opinion, that it should not be made a term of communion in this kingdom.”

These two propositions were made the subject of discussion in the Irish provincial synod. After long deliberation, the question was put with regard to the first,—“ Shall the *status ante litem*, as mentioned in the first proposition, be approved of as *one step*, in present circumstances, towards a coalescence?”—when it carried, with only one dissenting voice, *Approve*. The question was then put with regard to the second,—“ Approve or Disapprove, of the second proposition, as a step towards coalescence?”—when it carried unanimously, *Disapprove*. A committee was appointed to consider what ought to be substituted in the room of the second proposition. After the committee gave in their report, several proposals were made: but at length, it was determined, by an unanimous vote, that the following answer should be returned to the brethren of the Burgher Synod:—“ 1. That we are willing to form one church with our Burgher brethren on the first proposition, namely, *status ante litem*. 2. That a testimony be drawn up by both parties, in conformity to the *status ante litem*, and adapted to our present circumstances in Ireland. 3. That a committee be appointed by both sides for this purpose; and we, on our part, appoint Messrs. Campbell, Hunter, and Gardner, as a committee to correspond with our Burgher brethren for said purpose.” The clerk was enjoined to send an extract from the minutes, respecting the coalescence, as an answer to the communication which had been received from the General Associate synod.\*

It appears that the diversity of opinion entertained concerning the second proposition, prevented the union from taking place, at this time, betwixt the two synods in Ireland; for I do not find that any farther measures were adopted toward the accomplishing of this object, till several years afterwards. Having failed in effecting a union with their Burgher brethren, an application was made, in the following year, to the General Synod, by some of the members connected with the provincial synod in Ireland, requesting them to consider, whether it would not be expedient to allow the brethren in

\* Christian Magazine for the year 1805, p. 435.

that kingdom to transact their own business, without being in immediate subordination to that court. This proposal it was considered inexpedient to entertain; and no farther attempt was made at present to disturb the relation which had hitherto existed betwixt the two synods.

## CHAPTER XIII.

Controversy concerning the magistrate's power in matters of religion—Gives rise to keen discussion—Overtures from the Glasgow and Forfar presbyteries—Committee appointed to prepare the draft of an overture respecting the power of the magistrate—Overture presented—Consideration of it delayed—Remitted to sessions.—Committee appointed to extend the Testimony—Draft of a new Narrative and Testimony presented—Former overture superseded—Draft of the Narrative and Testimony considered—Acknowledgment of Sins, &c. reviewed—And remodelled—Act concerning students of divinity—Students not required in present circumstances to covenant—Protest by Messrs. Bruce and Aitken—Representation and petition from Mr. M'Crie of Edinburgh, concerning power of the civil magistrate—Remonstrances from the sessions of Whitburn and Kirriemuir—Motion made by Mr Bruce—Rejected—Review of the Testimony finished—Testimony enacted and published—Protest by Messrs. Bruce, M'Crie, and others—Review of the Narrative finished—Enacted and published—Protest by Messrs. M'Crie, Whytock, and others—Introduction added to the Narrative and Testimony—The whole sanctioned by the Synod—New Narrative and Testimony made a term of communion—This resolution modified—Remarks—Manliness and good sense displayed by the Synod—Extracts from the Testimony—Ministers, preachers, and others, to join in the bond—Five ministers protest against the deed about covenanting—Extended reasons of protest presented by these brethren—Declaration of Synod concerning the protest—Remonstrance by Mr. Bruce and others—Committee appointed to answer it—Protesting brethren decline the authority of Synod—Withdraw from its communion—Complaint against Mr. Aitken—Constitutional Associate Presbytery formed at Whitburn—Reasons assigned for its formation—Mr. Aitken's case investigated—Mr. Aitken deposed—Charge against Mr. M'Crie—Mr. M'Crie deposed—Proceedings in the case of Messrs. Hog and Bruce—Death of Mr. Hog—Sentence of deposition pronounced on Messrs. Bruce and Chalmers—Mr. Bruce's address to his congregation—Declaration published by the separating brethren—Loud outcry raised against the Synod—Conduct of Synod defended—Statement of points at issue between the Synod and separating brethren—Remarks on the controversy.

A CONTROVERSY had now been carrying on, for several years, in the Secession Church, respecting the power of the magistrate in matters of religion. This question had occasioned many a keen debate in the church courts. Much eloquence had been expended upon it in the pulpit; and numerous pamphlets had been called forth by it from the press. This controversy was marked, during the progress of it, by a considerable display of angry feeling, and it terminated, like almost all other controversies, not in the conviction, but in the separation of the belligerent parties. After the usual quantity of harangues, offensive and defensive, had been delivered, and after the full complement of dissents and protests had been entered upon the ecclesiastical records, both sections of the Secession (Burgher and Antiburgher), witnessed the departure,

from their respective synods, of a small minority, each of which professed to occupy holier ground, and to lift up a purer banner for the truth, than those from whom they had withdrawn. Instead of mingling the details of this controversy with the transactions recorded in the preceding part of the narrative, and thereby interrupting the continuity of the account, I have thought proper to reserve them, till I reached that period in the history of the General Associate synod, when I should be able to present these details to the reader in a connected form. At this period I have now arrived. In this chapter I propose retracing my steps for a little, and giving an account of the progress of the question respecting the magistrates' power in matters of religion, following it throughout the different stages of its discussion in the General Associate synod, until it issued in the separation of a small section from the synod, who formed themselves into a distinct ecclesiastical judicatory, and still exist, as a branch of the Session, in a state of separation from their brethren.

On the 11th of May, 1791, two overtures were laid on the table of the General Associate synod, one from the presbytery of Glasgow, relating to those passages in the Confession of Faith which sanction the interference of the civil magistrate in matters of religion,\* and another from the presbytery of Forfar respecting the Testimony held by the synod. The former required the synod to give such a statement of their views, concerning the doctrine contained in these objectionable passages, as should be more in accordance with the sentiments held by a large proportion of the brethren: the latter required the synod to simplify and extend the Testimony. Both overtures were read; but the synod did not deem it expedient to enter upon the consideration of them at present. They merely appointed their clerk to transmit a copy of the overtures to each of the provincial synods, that the brethren might have them under their consideration till next meeting.

At their next meeting, held in May 1792, a motion was made that a committee be appointed to prepare the draft of an act, in accordance with the spirit of the overture from Glasgow presbytery. This motion was agreed to; and Messrs. Ramsay, Bruce (the Professor), James Robertson, and Taylor, with the clerk of the synod, were appointed a committee for the purpose specified. Mr. Aitken (of Kirriemuir) craved to have it marked, that he did not agree to the appointment of this committee. The overture from the presbytery of Forfar, respecting the Testimony, was recommended to the consideration of provincial synods and presbyteries, and they were

\* See these passages quoted in p. 378 of this work.

to be able to report, at next meeting of the General synod, that they had devoted at least one sederunt to a special consideration of this subject.

When the synod met in May 1793, the committee now mentioned presented the draft of an act, respecting the power of the civil magistrate in matters of religion, which was read, and a considerable time was spent in conversing on the subject, when the farther consideration of it was delayed till a future sederunt. But in consequence of the press of other matters, they had not time to resume the consideration of it at this meeting. They appointed an interim meeting to be held in the month of October, for the express purpose of considering this question, and also for the purpose of considering the overture from the Forfar presbytery.

The synod met, according to appointment, on the 15th of October. The meeting was opened with a sermon by Mr. George Murray, who preached on Rev. iii. 11, "Behold I come quickly: hold fast that which thou hast, that no man take thy crown." Messrs. John Heugh, Alexander Pringle, and David Black, were afterwards employed in prayer, with praise in the intervals. They then adjourned to meet on the following day, when the moderator, with Messrs. James Robertson and Hay, engaged in prayer previous to their entering upon the business which had called them together. A discussion arose which of the two overtures, above-mentioned, should be first considered, when it was decided by a vote, that the overture from the Glasgow presbytery, respecting the power of the civil magistrate, should have the precedence. Mr. Aitken craved to have it marked, that he thought the overture from the Forfar presbytery, respecting the simplifying and extending of the Testimony, was entitled to previous consideration.

After a long time spent in considering the Glasgow overture, whether it would be expedient to pass it into an act, the synod found that many members had not had an opportunity of perusing it; and they therefore delayed the farther discussion of it, and ordered it to be printed, and a copy of it to be sent to each minister and session, that they might be prepared to give judgment concerning it at next meeting.

Next day (the 17th), the synod entered upon the consideration of the overture for simplifying and extending the Testimony, from the Forfar presbytery. A long discussion ensued, at the close of which a motion was made, "That a committee be appointed to prepare the draft of an act for extending the Testimony held by them, in opposition to the errors and evils that have prevailed since the Secession Testimony was stated, and particularly in opposition to the dreadful abounding of

Arian and Socinian heresies, and the latitudinarian system of the present times; but delay that part of the overture respecting the simplification of the Testimony." The first part of this motion was unanimously adopted, and Messrs. Colin Brown, John Gray, Alexander Pringle, James Aitken, John Jamieson, Alexander Allan, and James Hay, were appointed a committee to prepare an act in accordance with the terms of it: but with regard to the second part, there was a diversity of opinion. Some proposed that instead of delaying, they should lay aside this part of the overture altogether. This gave rise to another discussion, and the question being put, "Delay, or, Lay aside," it carried, by a considerable majority, "Delay." Eight ministers and four elders craved to have it marked, that they had voted "Lay aside."

It was not till the meeting of synod, in April 1796, that the committee reported they had completed the task assigned them, and laid upon the table a draft of a "Narrative and Testimony," and requested that the synod would give judgment concerning it, at an early period. After reading the draft, the synod expressed their satisfaction with the diligence of the committee in preparing it; and they ordered it to be printed, and copies of it to be sent to ministers and sessions for their perusal: they also appointed a meeting to be held on the 11th of October, for the special purpose of taking this document into consideration. The overture of the Glasgow presbytery, concerning the power of the civil magistrate in matters of religion, was now completely superseded, as the sentiments of the overture were embodied in the new Testimony.

When the synod met in October, after considerable time spent in conversing about the draft which their committee had prepared, the following question was put to the vote, "Are the synod so far satisfied with the plan of the present overture, as to proceed to read and further judge of the contents of it, or not?" when it was carried in the affirmative. Messrs. Bruce and Ramsay craved that it might be marked, "that they had not clearness to concur in the vote as stated,"—and they reserved to themselves the power of giving such a declaration of their sentiments afterwards, as they might judge proper.

It was no trivial business in which the synod now engaged, when they entered upon the review of a document consisting of two hundred octavo pages, and including all the controversial points in divinity and church-government, which had been discussed in this country for successive generations. To review such a document, paragraph by paragraph, and to sit in judgment on the sentiments contained in each, was indeed a work

of great labour, and it was not without reason that they termed it "a weighty work." My readers will not wonder, when they are informed that the synod were engaged in this work for a period of nearly eight years. They commenced their review in the month of October 1796, and they did not complete it till May 1804. There was scarcely a meeting of synod held, during the course of these years, at which there were not several sederunts spent in considering the Narrative and Testimony.

But during the same period, there were other official documents, the revision of which occupied their attention. The *Acknowledgment of Sins* and the *Engagement to Duties* were not considered sufficiently suited to the present "circumstances of the church," and a committee was appointed to prepare an overture on the subject. The *Acknowledgment* contained a summary account of the defections and errors that had prevailed in the different sections of the church, since the period of the Reformation, and an expression of sorrow that such should have been permitted to exist. This paper was read over on occasions of covenanting, and all persons entering into covenant were considered as solemnly assenting to the statements which it contained. The *Engagement to Duties* or *Profession of Faith* (as it was also called), was appended to the *Acknowledgment*, and contained a declaration of what the covenanters engaged or professed to do. This constituted, properly speaking, the *Bond* which they were required to swear and subscribe. Those who had publicly assented to the *Acknowledgment of Sins*, and who had solemnly sworn and subscribed the *Engagement to Duties*, were regarded as having performed the duty of public covenanting; they were "joined in the bond." This duty was enjoined as obligatory not merely upon office-bearers and expectants of the ministry, but upon all members of the church.

While the synod were engaged in moulding their Testimony into a shape better adapted to their existing circumstances, as a church, expunging from it objectionable passages, and making it express, in a more decided tone, their sentiments on the great question of the magistrate's power in matters of religion, it was deemed no less necessary that the *Acknowledgment of Sins* should be reviewed and re-modelled, in order to accommodate it also to present circumstances. Accordingly, a draft of a new Acknowledgment was presented by the committee appointed for this purpose, and the synod spent several sederunts, at successive meetings, in considering it; and at last, after much time and labour had been spent upon the subject, they gave it their formal sanction on the 11th of September, 1799.

In the meantime the synod made an enactment, declaring it to be allowable for presbyteries to admit on trials for licence those students of divinity who had finished their course of study, even though they had not "joined in the bond for renewing the covenants," as they could not be expected to do so, while the public documents of the church were undergoing a revision. But such students, before being received on trials, were to declare themselves in presence of the presbytery to be "the friends of covenanting work, particularly of the religious covenants of our ancestors, and of the duty and seasonableness of public covenanting;" they were further to "signify their firm resolution of going on in said work, so soon as the synod were agreed with regard to an *Acknowledgment of Sins* and an *Engagement to Duties* more suited to the present circumstances of the church." Mr. Bruce protested against this enactment, for reasons to be afterwards assigned; and Mr. Aitken adhered to his protest.

At next meeting of synod, Mr. Bruce presented the following declaration, that it might be entered on the record:—"That some appear to have considered the overture (of the Testimony), while under review, as exhibiting the public and authentic declaration of the principles of this synod, at least so far as the review has proceeded, and as suspending or invalidating former acts, wherein these principles were judicially declared; and this seems to receive countenance from a deed of last meeting of synod, suspending progress in covenanting, because some things in the Testimony and Acknowledgment of Sins are presently under consideration: He therefore craves to have it marked, that his continuing to concur in revising the overture is not to be constructed as admitting this view; but that he proceeds in this, or in considering hereafter any new overture for an Acknowledgment of Sins, upon the supposition that our principles, and the acts explaining them, remain in force in the meantime; that we may not violate the rule of the apostle, 'Prove all things, and hold fast that which is good.'"

When the synod adopted (11th September, 1799) the new Acknowledgment of Sins and Engagement to Duties, they agreed that a clause should be inserted in the second question of the formula, the purport of which was, that the assent given by ministers, probationers, and elders, to the doctrine of the Confession of Faith, and of other standard books, was to be understood as qualified by the declaration of synod given in May 1796,\* and renewed in September 1799. Messrs. George Whytock and John Smith craved that it might be marked,

\* See pp. 381, 382 of this work.

that they did not acquiesce in this measure ; and against these proceedings of the synod Mr. Bruce protested in the following terms :—

“ I, Archibald Bruce, though cordially approving of the duty of public covenanting and of covenant renovation, as enacted and practised in the Secession, and not averse from a deliberate review of the former Acknowledgment of Sins and Bond, or a farther and proper accommodation of them to present times and circumstances, yet find myself obliged to protest, and I hereby do protest, in my own name and in name of all the ministers or people in the Associate Body, who may reckon it their duty to adhere, against this present act of synod, so far as it enjoins a new Acknowledgment of Sins and Engagement to Duties, inconsistent with and derogatory with those formerly enacted and solemnly recognised among us, or with our declared principles ; particularly as tending to introduce in a rash and subdolous manner, and to mingle in these solemn exercises, a new sectarian scheme, in reference to public reformation and covenants ; and for other reasons that may be stated and more fully illustrated hereafter.

“ I, in like manner, renew my protestation formerly taken against the general and unfair manner in which some part of the doctrine of the Confession of Faith was virtually dropped and condemned, and the change of our formula and profession that ensued, which vague exception or condemnation is now judicially extended, and to be applied to every thing relating to the same subject in other standard books or papers hitherto assented to among us. I also renew the protestation taken last year against the deed of synod, allowing young men to be licensed and ordained, in a way of dispensing with the former terms required of them in regard to covenanting, for the reasons already given in, though not yet read or answered by this court ; and must consequently hold the procedure that hath followed thereon, in this and in the inferior judicatories, as irregular and unconstitutional. I farther protest that none of these deeds can be held obligatory on me, nor ought to be so on any belonging to this synod, against any former vows they have come under to God, or against formerly established terms of ministerial or Christian communion in the Associate Body ; nor ought they to hinder a continued adherence to the standards of the reformed Church of Scotland, or the Secession Testimony, or any article of our solemn covenants, as formerly renewed and sworn among us ; nor yet to stop procedure in the mean time in covenanting, agreeably to the principles and plan formerly adopted, either in the same form of words, or in a form with alterations not liable to the same objections, as the Lord may lead forward therein.

"And I farther declare, that communion with my brethren henceforth, unless I obtain other light, can only be maintained according to the tenor of this protestation, and upon the ancient terms and bonds of our religious association, and not on the footing of these late innovating acts."

Mr. Aitken gave in a paper, at next meeting of synod (April, 1800), adhering to Mr. Bruce's protest, with the following explanation, viz. "That as I did not signify my adherence to Mr. Bruce's protest formerly taken against the act of synod, in reference to a certain part of the doctrine taught in the 23d chapter of our Confession of Faith, at the time said protest was taken, on account of a former dissent by me in that cause, I now see it to be my duty to remonstrate;—Likeas I hereby do remonstrate against the foresaid act of synod, and petition that the synod will review the same."

Mr. M'Crie of Edinburgh also presented a representation and petition, craving that the synod would review their deed of 1796, respecting the power of the civil magistrate in matters of religion.\* Remonstrances on the same subject were afterwards presented from the session of Whitburn (M. Bruce's), from a number of people belonging to that congregation, and from the session of Kirriemuir. Mr. Bruce, desirous to arrest the progress of the synod in the work in which they were engaged, brought forward (5th September, 1800) a motion to the following effect:—"Whereas an overture, under the title of a Testimony, &c. hath for a considerable time been under the consideration of synod, for terminating our deliberations on this subject, it is moved, that in regard we have already an Act, Declaration, and Testimony, judicially authorized among us, in which, in connexion with posterior acts, the principles of the Associate body are explicitly stated and declared; and as the committee who compiled and introduced this overture, in the form of a Testimony, on a plan entirely new,—the use of which, if enacted as proposed, would tend to supersede the use and authority of the former Testimony, and of other papers, as hitherto received among us,—acted in so far without warrant from the synod; therefore the synod agree to dismiss the further consideration of it in that form, or with the foresaid view: But in regard the overture contains a statement and assertion of many scriptural and seasonable

\* It is rather singular, that the sentiments of Mr. M'Crie should have undergone such a rapid change, with regard to the power of the magistrate in matters of religion. In 1796, he refused to submit to ordination, until the synod gave relief to his conscience, by passing an act, declaring that they disapproved of "*every thing* in the Confession of Faith, which, taken by itself, seems to allow the punishment of good and peaceable subjects, on account of their religious opinions and observances." In 1800, he petitioned that this act should be reviewed and rescinded.

truths against a number of prevailing errors, the publication of which may be useful at this time, the synod appoint that so many chapters of this overture as treat upon the doctrines and principles of faith and religion, commonly received among us, and which, in the review, have been unanimously approved of, be immediately referred to the committee for publication."

This motion of Mr. Bruce was rejected, only three persons (exclusive of himself) having voted for it, viz. Messrs. Aitken, M'Crie, and Dun. That portion of the overture, the review of which had been finished, was ordered to be printed, and copies of it to be sent to ministers and elders, for their perusal. In October, 1801, the synod having completed their review of that part of the overture called the Testimony, agreed that it should be enacted and published, so that the people under their inspection might have an opportunity of perusing it; but at the same time they declared, that it should not be made a term of communion amongst them, until they had also finished their review of the Narrative. Protests and remonstrances were made against this decision by Messrs. Bruce, Hog, M'Crie, and Whytock. Mr. Chalmers, who was not present at this meeting, craved leave, at the next, to remonstrate against it also. The synod did not consider that he had any right to have his remonstrance read, but they granted it as a matter of indulgence. Papers containing reasons of protest were presented by all the remonstrants. The general tenor of these papers was the same. Mr. Whytock concluded his remonstrance in the following terms, and the sentiments which he expressed were the sentiments of the whole:—"The subscriber remonstrates against this act, and protests that the synod shall set aside or review and correct it, that it may correspond, in matter or design, with the Testimony already on the field, and particularly with the act of the Associate Presbytery for renewing the covenants: And further protests, that his continuing to hold communion with this synod, so long as he can find it practicable, shall be considered as proceeding only upon the original grounds, upon which he was originally admitted to be a member of it, and in the way of disclaiming this act, so far as contrary thereunto; and, in a word, that his concurring in admitting persons to communion, shall, as formerly, be in the way of receiving their adherence to the judicial Act and Testimony emitted by the Associate Presbytery, aye and until a Testimony more correspondent to it than this, in matter and spirit, shall be substituted in its place." A committee was appointed to prepare answers to the reasons of protest given in by the remonstrants; and when the answers were read, they were approved of as satisfactory.

In September, 1803, the synod having finished their revision of the Narrative, enacted it, as they had previously done the Testimony; and they also gave their sanction to an Introduction which had been prepared by a committee. The whole overture, including Introduction, Narrative, and Testimony, was then ordered to be published for the perusal of the people, with the following note prefixed:—"The synod, having enacted the subsequent papers, have agreed that they will consider, against next meeting, of adopting the Testimony, as that to which accessions will be given to those who propose to join our connexion, agreeably to what is expressed in the Introduction." A formal protestation, subscribed by Messrs. Whytock, Aitken, and M'Crie, was laid upon the table, against these decisions.

Mr. Chalmers, who was prevented by indisposition from attending when the synod were engaged in reviewing and correcting the Introduction and Narrative, craved (in a written communication) that as he was unacquainted with the precise state of the overture as now enacted, "the door might be left open to him to declare his sentiments, and exoner himself respecting it, after he shall have had an opportunity of giving it a deliberate perusal." Mr. Bruce, whose absence was occasioned by his official labour as Professor of Divinity, sent a letter, the following extract from which he required to be inserted in the synod's record:—"If a decision, such as has been feared, shall be gone into, I desire to have it represented, that as I adhere to former regular steps taken in synod to prevent such a decision, and to any similar steps that may be found necessary to be taken by brethren in support of our former principles and terms of fellowship; so I must consider myself as to be entitled to full liberty to exoner myself as to any such deeds at this time, at a posterior meeting of synod, if in providence I shall have an opportunity of attending."

When the synod met in April, 1804, Mr. Hog, who had not been present at the last meeting, offered to adhere to the protest taken by Messrs. Whytock, Aitken, and M'Crie, against the deed of synod, enacting the Narrative and Introduction. Though Mr. Hog had not tendered any excuse for his absence from the meeting in September, yet the synod so far indulged him, as to permit his protest to be recorded. Mr. Chalmers declared his adherence to the same protest. These five brethren thought proper to "exoner" their consciences still further at this meeting, by presenting an additional paper of remonstrance, which concluded in the following terms:—"But if the synod will hearken to no remonstrance on this subject, the subscribers again protest, that they shall be justified in holding by our former terms of communion, proceeding in

admissions in the same way as formerly, and that they shall be at liberty to use all means necessary and competent for maintaining and vindicating the principles of the Secession, as originally stated." A committee was appointed to take this paper into consideration, and also to converse with the remonstrants. This committee reported, that some of the scruples of their brethren had been removed, but that others still remained.

The synod then took into consideration a paper of corrections and additions, which it was proposed to make to the Narrative and Testimony, with the view of obviating the objections of the remonstrants. After several sittings had been spent in considering these corrections and additions, they were adopted; but the adopting of them only gave occasion to the recording of another dissent. Messrs. Whytock and M'Crie craved to have it marked, that the grounds of their protest, so far from being removed, were rather confirmed, by the corrections which had now been adopted; and they desired, as usual, that "the door might be left open to them" to state their minds farther on the subject, as they might see cause, in the future progress of the business.

This tedious and laborious work of revising the Testimony, in which the synod had now been engaged for several years, was at last brought to a close on the 2d of May, 1804, by the adopting of the following motion:—"The synod agree to adopt the Introduction, Narrative, and Testimony, as now corrected and enlarged, as the term of admission for those who shall apply for joining in communion with us, with the limitations stated in the Introduction; to be acted upon, after the people have had due time to acquaint themselves with these deeds: And that the synod further agree, that all due tenderness be exercised to those who are already in communion with them, whether ministers or people, who may have scruples as to some things contained in them." When this motion was adopted, Messrs. Whytock, Aitken, Chalmers, Hog, and M'Crie, declared that they adhered to their former protestation, and reserved to themselves the liberty of making farther opposition to this and former deeds, should they judge it necessary.

There were various considerations that influenced the General Associate synod, in thus remodelling their Testimony. One of these was a desire to simplify. The distinguishing principles of the Secession Church had hitherto been scattered throughout a number of official publications; such as the Judicial Act and Testimony, the Act concerning the Doctrine of Grace, the Act for Renewing the Covenants, the Answers to Mr. Nairn's Reasons of Dissent, with the Declaration ap-

pending, and other acts of the Associate presbytery and synod. It was not to be supposed that all those who were in the communion of the Secession, could have either opportunity or capacity to peruse these documents with understanding; and the synod, therefore, found it expedient, according to their own declaration, "to collect the substance of them all into a plain and comprehensive summary, which persons in ordinary circumstances and of ordinary capacity may both read and understand." Another consideration which influenced them in this matter, was a desire to extend their Testimony, so as to bring it down to the present period. Various things had occurred, since the commencement of the Secession, which rendered this, in their opinion, necessary. The corruptions of the Established Church had increased, and other denominations of professing Christians had sprung up around them, of whose principles they did not approve, and against whom they considered it their duty to testify. Still further, the phraseology of the original Testimony, on certain points, was not considered sufficiently explicit, or rather it conveyed a meaning different from that which was held by the great majority of the synod; and it was therefore deemed necessary, that the language employed should be less ambiguous, and more in accordance with the sentiments of those whose opinions it was intended to express.

With regard to the sense in which the adopting of the new Testimony was to be regarded as a term of admission to their communion, the synod made the following declaration:—"In the former Testimony, the declaration of our principles is intermixed with much historical narration. This has given some persons occasion to think that we required every Seceder to vouch for the truth of all such narration, which very few could be in a capacity to do. As no such thing was ever required or expected, in order to obviate this mistake, the synod have now separated the Narrative from the doctrinal Testimony. The Narrative being enacted by this synod, as well as what is properly called the Testimony, is to be considered as a part of the synod's Judicial Testimony. It will be expected, that every person who shall henceforth be admitted to our communion, should read the Narrative, in order to his having a proper understanding of the Testimony: And though such an adherence to the Narrative, as includes a vouching for the truth of facts, will not be required; yet no person will be admitted to communion with us, who formally condemns the attainments in reformation of which the synod approve; or approves of those steps of defection which the synod condemn. Nor will any be admitted who does not express an adherence to the doctrines contained in the Testimony itself."

This Testimony, on which so much time and attention had been expended by the synod, is, upon the whole, a business-like production, and the publication of it was fitted to be useful to the people under their charge, both in making them acquainted with their principles, and in enabling them to defend them. There is to be found in it much valuable information on doctrinal topics, lucidly arranged, and scripturally expressed. It contains also a firm and honest avowal of the sentiments of the synod upon those debateable questions, which then agitated the church, and which continue to agitate it at the present day. Some of the statements contained in the Introduction do honour to the manliness and good sense of the synod, and must command the approbation of every intelligent Christian. The sentiments expressed are such as all genuine reformers ought to adopt.

Lest any might suppose that, in the remodelling of their Testimony, they were influenced more by regard to the opinions of men, than by the word of God, or that they considered themselves bound implicitly to adopt or reject whatever had been adopted or rejected by those good men who had gone before them, they made the following statements:—“The foundation upon which we rest the whole of our ecclesiastical constitution, is the testimony of God in his word. That main pillar of the Reformation, ‘that the Bible contains the whole religion of protestants,’ we adopt for our fundamental principle, and build upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner-stone. Though we should be defamed as setting up the reformation attained to betwixt the years 1638 and 1650, as the standard of our church state, we hold every thought of this kind in detestation. We acknowledge *that* to have been a period of eminent ecclesiastical purity; but we call no man nor church, Master. One is our Master, even Christ, and his word is our only unerring rule. ‘To the law and to the testimony, if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them.’”\*

With regard to what has usually been termed the *First* and *Second Reformations*,—the one from popery, and the other from prelacy,—they say, “Our declaring an adherence to these Reformations, and particularly to the latter, as comprehending in it all the valuable attainments of the former, does not imply our approbation of all the measures adopted in the prosecution of either. Some of the measures that have been adopted in the prosecution of the last, that have been considered by many as most exceptionable, we do not hesitate to ap-

\* Narrative and Testimony, enacted by the General Associate Synod in 1804. P. 9.

prove; such as their meeting together to concert measures for getting rid of public evils, even when their meetings for that purpose were forbidden by orders from court; their defending themselves by arms, when unjustly attacked by their enemies; their pledging themselves to cleave to one another in the prosecution of the cause in which they were engaged, and using means for securing to themselves the quiet possession of their Christian privileges. We do not vindicate the embodying the matter of their religious profession with the laws of the country, and giving it the formal sanction of civil authority. It is not, however, to the imperfect managements of men, that we declare our adherence, but to the Reformation itself."\*

In reference to the Westminster Confession of Faith, and Catechisms, they declare, "That, in our adherence to them, we are not to be viewed as adopting a rule of faith distinct from the Holy Scriptures. Though we acknowledge these as subordinate standards, they are not at all the rule of what we are bound to believe, but a public declaration of what we do believe; and believe, because revealed to us in the word of God. By this word they are themselves to be tried and judged. The reason why we use them, and avow our adherence to them, is, that we may give public testimony of our soundness in the faith, and thereby distinguish ourselves from those who pervert the scriptures, by glosses contrary to their genuine meaning." They further declare, "That, as no human composure, however excellent and well expressed, can be supposed to contain a full and comprehensive view of divine truth; so, by this adherence, we are not precluded from embracing, upon due deliberation, any further light which may afterward arise from the word of God, about any article of divine truth."†

In their new Testimony, the synod took very decided ground with regard to the interference of the civil magistrate in matters of religion. They condemned, in explicit terms, the connexion betwixt church and state. The language which they employed on this subject, was similar to that which has since been rendered more familiar to the public by the Voluntary Church controversy. The following passages, extracted from their publication, will show the clear and enlightened views which they entertained on this question; the sentiments expressed are in accordance with the dictates of revelation and of sound reason.

In drawing the line of distinction betwixt church and state, they declare,—“1. That the church is a spiritual kingdom.

\* Narrative, &c. P. 10.

† Ibid. Pp. 12, 13.

Her members, as such, are considered as spiritual persons. The same character belongs to her doctrines, ordinances, and office-bearers. But the kingdoms of this world are secular and earthly societies; the members of which, as such, are considered as capable of performing the duties, and of enjoying the privileges, belonging to a civil state. The power of the church is wholly spiritual, and is exercised by her office-bearers, in its whole extent, solely with respect to the spiritual interests of men, and in no other name but that of Christ. But the power competent to worldly kingdoms is wholly temporal, respecting only the temporal interests of society. Their rulers can have no spiritual power, because this cannot reside in a civil body, and therefore cannot be communicated to them by those who have intrusted them with power. The rulers of the church are bound to publish and execute the laws given her by Christ; but have no right to make new laws, or in the least to deviate from his. But civil society may choose what form of government, and may make what civil laws they please, if they do nothing contrary to the eternal law of righteousness, which is the rule of civil society, as such. The glory of God, in the salvation of elect sinners, is the end of the erection of the church, and of all her doctrines and ordinances. The end of civil government, in subordination to the divine glory, is the public and temporal good of civil society.

"2. That neither of these kingdoms hath power over the other. The church hath a spiritual authority over such of the subjects and rulers of earthly kingdoms, as are in her communion; and the civil powers have the same authority over the members and office-bearers of the church, as over the rest of their subjects. But she hath no power over earthly kingdoms, in their collective and civil capacity; nor have they any power over her as a church. Christ her Head, while on earth, disclaimed all exercise of civil authority; and there is not the least evidence from the New Testament, that he intrusted his servants with any. So far from this, it is given as the character of the *Man of Sin*, that he should arrogate authority over earthly kingdoms. On the other hand, neither these kingdoms, nor their sovereigns, have any power in or over the church. Christ, her only Sovereign, hath neither directly nor indirectly, given them any spiritual authority. The Christian religion lays every one who professes it, under the strongest obligations to the faithful discharge of the duties of his station. But it annexes no new powers to any office or relation founded in nature; therefore, Christian magistrates have no power to give laws to the church; to appoint her office-bearers, or dictate to them in the discharge of their office; to prescribe a confession of faith, or form of worship, to the

church, or their subjects in general; authoritatively to call meetings of church judicatories, in ordinary cases, or to direct or control them in their judicial procedure. In matters purely religious, civil rulers have no right to judge for any but themselves.”\*

On the subject of public religious covenanting, the synod thus express themselves:—“That public religious covenanting is the deed of a number of church members, in which they jointly and publicly profess to renounce all hope of life from the covenant of works; to take hold of the covenant of grace, and to devote themselves to the Lord; and in the strength of promised grace, engage faithfully to cleave to him, to hold fast his truth, to perform the various duties which they owe to God and man, in their respective stations and relations, and to strengthen one another’s hands in the work of the Lord. Although an oath be not essential to the performance of this duty, it is generally most proper to accompany it. Those who entered into covenant under the Old Testament, frequently attested the sincerity of their profession by an oath. When this is foretold as a duty to be performed in New Testament times, it is in different places called *swearing*. The solemnity of an oath seems peculiarly proper, when the truth is violently opposed. In this case, especially, it is highly reasonable that we should attest our allegiance to the King of Zion, with as much solemnity as is required by earthly kings; and that we should seal our confession to the *Amen, the faithful and true Witness*, in the same manner in which he sealed his.”

They then acknowledge the continued obligation of the covenants “of our reforming ancestors,” upon persons of all ranks in these lands, and their posterity. They also acknowledge the obligation of the Engagement to Duties come under in the Secession Church; after which they make the following remarks on the Solemn League and Covenant:—“Is it objected that the Solemn League and Covenant was enjoined under civil pains? We grant that it was. But this was in a great measure the consequence of civil and religious matters being joined together in the same oath. How far those in power acted properly, in enforcing the civil matters contained in it with civil pains, we do not reckon it incumbent on us to determine; but we are ready to acknowledge, that, if matters purely religious were enforced by such pains, it was unwarrantable. As the synod are still of the same judgment with the Associate Presbytery, that the Solemn League and Covenant was ‘*for the matter just and warrantable, for the ends necessary and commendable, and for the time seasonable*;

\* Narrative and Testimony, enacted by the General Associate Synod, in 1804. p. 193.

therefore the synod, in acknowledging the obligation of the covenants of our ancestors, make no exception as to any part of their matter, according to the limitations expressed in the Narrative and Testimony, though they do not consider every thing in them as so particularly applicable to every period, or to our present circumstances.

"It has been objected, that in the Solemn League, they swore that they should, *'without respect of persons, endeavour the extirpation of popery, prelacy, superstition, heresy, schism, and whatsoever should be found contrary to sound doctrine.'* But, as the evils enumerated, and not persons, are represented as the objects of extirpation, or *rooting out*, by our covenanting ancestors; whatever means any person, either in former or present times, might think themselves bound by the covenant to employ for the extirpation of these evils, yet we, in adhering to the religious reformation, engaged to in this covenant, utterly disclaim all obligation to use any methods inconsistent with liberty of conscience in prosecuting the ends of it."\*

After the synod had completed the revision of their Narrative and Testimony, they passed an act declaring that all ministers, preachers, students, elders, and others, who had not yet covenanted, should "join in the bond," agreeably to the tenor of the new Testimony; and they appointed a special meeting of the synod to be held for that purpose in the month of May, 1805;† they also recommended to all the ministers connected with the synod, to turn the attention of their people to "the ordinance of public covenanting," by preaching on the subject; and to inculcate upon them the obligation under which they lay, to embrace the earliest opportunity of joining in that work. They further revised the Formula of Questions put to ministers and elders, at their ordination, and to preachers when receiving licence; and they made such alterations in it, as were rendered necessary by the improvements made in their Testimony.

Against these proceedings Messrs. Whytock, Aitken, Chalmers, Hog, and M'Crie entered their protest in the following terms:—"The subscribers find it necessary to protest, in their own name, and in the name of all their brethren who may adhere to them, against the deed of synod, agreeing to, and enacting the overture about covenanting; because said deed proceeds upon the doctrine about covenanting, laid down in the new Testimony already protested against; because it does not correspond with the renovation of our solemn covenants,

\* Testimony, p. 159.

† The proceedings that took place at this meeting, have been noticed above. See p. 423

agreed upon by the Associate Presbytery ; and because it appears to them to lead to engagements different from, if not contrary to, those we have already come under,—craving liberty to illustrate and enlarge these reasons, and to add others, according as they may find necessary, upon perusing the deed, when put into their hands, protesting that they shall not be considered as bound to take part in the execution of this deed, or to conform to the injunctions and directions which it contains. They also protest against the deed now passed appointing various alterations in the Formula, for the purpose of its being accommodated to the acts respecting the new Testimony, and the act about covenanting above mentioned ; upon all which, they take instruments, and crave extracts."

At next meeting of synod held in May 1805, a paper, containing reasons of protest in a more extended form, was presented by Messrs. Whytock, Chalmers, Hog, and M'Crie. The synod, having formerly appointed a committee to answer the remonstrance which had been given in by these brethren, at a former meeting ; and, being satisfied with the answers which their committee had returned, did not consider it necessary to take any particular notice of the paper now presented ; but " for the satisfaction and exoneration of the protesting brethren," they agreed to engross their protest in their minutes, " in the way of signifying their disapprobation of various expressions in it, particularly in representing the manner of covenanting by the synod as opposite and contradictory unto former covenanting in the Secession." At the same time, the synod declared, " That although these brethren cannot, for the time, see it to be their duty actively to concur in covenanting, agreeably to the Acknowledgment of Sins and Bond adopted by the synod, or to concur in licensing preachers, or in ordaining ministers, according to the present Formula ; yet the synod cannot admit procedure in covenanting, but on the footing of the Acknowledgment of Sins and Bond adopted by them, or allow any Formula to be used but that agreed upon by the synod ; and the synod expect that, in the event of their brethren's protestation being admitted into the records of court, they will not, either from the pulpit or from the press, impugn or oppose our principles, as stated by the synod ; and, as the synod have not prohibited our brethren from receiving into communion persons who may better understand or approve of the former statement of our principles ; so, on the other hand, the synod expect that our brethren shall not refuse to admit to communion such persons as have read and approve of our principles, as the synod have now stated them ; and, in fine, that our brethren conduct themselves, as they have done

hitherto, in attending church courts, and assisting their brethren on sacramental occasions, that the edification of the body may not be marred, but the peace and unity of the church promoted."

These brethren considered this declaration of synod an infringement of their ministerial liberty ; and they were under the necessity of again "exonerating" their consciences, by having recourse to another protestation, the purport of which was, "We find ourselves under the necessity of declaring, that we disclaim any acknowledgment of holding or exercising our ministry upon such new injunctions and rules, while we are resolved to discharge it as the Lord may direct, with faithfulness and prudence, according to former engagements." To this paper were appended the names of Messrs. Whytock, Chalmers, and M'Crie.

Mr Bruce, at this meeting, presented a remonstrance and protest, on his own account, in which he declared, that if the synod did not review and disannul their late deeds, he would be under the necessity of withdrawing from their communion. His paper concluded in the following terms :—"Upon the whole, the remonstrant thinks it high time that he, and others in a similar situation, should know how communion at present stands, or may hereafter stand, between the reverend synod and them, while they retain their present views, and find themselves obliged to act according to them. According to the import, and even the express letter of these new terms, he cannot but consider himself as really precluded from taking any active share in judicial procedure, or public ministrations, wherein these take effect, and while they stand in force. He expected to live and die in cordial union with his brethren, whom he loves, as well as in adherence to the profession that was the choice of his judgment, which must, however, be preferred to all that is dear on earth. But, in order that wonted fellowship may be continued, and the peace and unity of the body maintained in consistency with truth and a good conscience, he thinks himself entitled to demand, as he hereby in his own name, and in the name of other remonstrants who may see meet to adhere, and in the name of all others disposed to adhere to the former principles and engagements, doth demand that the acts imposing these new terms be speedily reversed, and that other grievances be taken into serious consideration, and in due time redressed ; declaring and protesting, in like manner, that till this requisition be granted, he must consider himself and them as actually expelled from their wonted communion with this synod, or the present prevailing party in it, merely for their consistent adherence, so far as enabled, to their former profession and vows ; and that, being reluctantly

obliged to give way to this, he, and others who may concur, shall in the mean time have a right, as they have a proper call, to the full exercise of any part of ministerial office or duty, individually or jointly, in the support of the public cause, according to the word of God, and presbyterian principles, disclaiming all purpose of encouraging schism and strife, or of increasing the lamentable divisions in the land; and he further protests, that he or they ought to be free from any restraint or hinderance from the operation of these acts, or by virtue of any power unconstitutionally claimed, or that may be exercised over him or them in so doing, by this General Synod, or any inferior judicatories, as acting according to the new system, and laws now adopted, in opposition to all remonstrances to the contrary, in reference to which system, no subjection was ever promised or due; while dutiful subordination, as limited in ordination vows, is not disclaimed, nor will be refused, upon their removing these bars they have raised. Nor shall communion be refused with any brethren or church-members, who may be willing to continue it upon former grounds, and as stated in late protestations, though they may not be of the same mind as to many points of difference, or clear as yet about the course or measures proper to be pursued."

Mr. Aitken declared that he adhered to the concluding part of this protest; and, at the following meeting, Messrs. Hog and M'Crie declared their adherence to it also. A committee was appointed to prepare answers to the reasons contained in the remonstrance; and, when the committee gave in their report, the synod sustained the answers as sufficient to take off the force of the reasons, though they did not approve of every sentiment or mode of expression employed by the committee. Notwithstanding these answers, the scruples of the protesting brethren remained unshaken. Nothing less than a total reversal of the deeds complained of, would satisfy them: and, as there was little or no probability that the synod would adopt any such measure, and thus nullify, by a single act, what it had cost them the labour of several years to accomplish, so these brethren now formed the resolution of withdrawing from the communion of the synod, and constituting themselves into a separate society. Accordingly, on the 7th of May, 1806, they presented the following paper, containing a virtual declinature of the synod's authority, and, after having presented it, they never again took their seat in the synod:

"We the subscribers do protest, in our own name, and in name of all who may see meet to adhere, against these deeds, as now made final, and that every one of us shall be free from the operation of these acts, and from all obligation of being responsible to this, or inferior judicatories, from acting in op-

position to them, so far as they are inconsistent with our former profession and engagements, holding any power that may be claimed or exercised by this synod, for compelling us to conformity to these new principles and constitution, as unwarrantable, and that we shall account any censure that may be inflicted on us, or on any adhering to us, of such a tendency, or for restraining or hindering us in the discharge of any duty or office we may have a call to perform, individually or conjunctly, in maintaining our common profession, or fulfilling our solemn engagements. We protest we must hold our right to the exercise of ministerial and judicial powers full and entire; whether we shall see it expedient to avail ourselves of the right protested for or not, in our state of separation and exclusion from present communion with the prevailing party in this synod, in their present course, into which, to our grief, we are reluctantly driven; which suspension of wonted fellowship in the Lord, and in the truth, we hope and pray may be but temporary and short. We renew the declaration made last year against any intention or course that may increase lamentable divisions, or promote any schismatical separation from the reformed and covenanted Church of Scotland, the original Secession Testimony, or the Associate synod, in adherence to it. The multiplication of sects and schisms we consider as among the prevailing evils of the age, against which we have solemnly avowed, as well as against other evils; and it is one great reason for our not concurring with our brethren in this new scheme, that it is of a schismatical tendency, and inconsistent with the promoting of a covenanted conjunction and uniformity. We shall endeavour to have the great end of an union among evangelical ministers and Christians in view, and will be ready to encourage correspondence with any belonging to this synod, or other denominations who still profess regard to the Westminster standards of uniformity, and presbyterian principles, with a view to have subsisting differences removed in a scriptural manner.

"In the mean time, we think we have reason to complain, that our brethren, with whom we have been joined in close and comfortable communion, have, on their part, broken the brotherly covenant, and laid a great bar in the way of promoting such a desirable union and uniformity; and we would remind them of the clause of the oath they had sworn, never to give themselves to indifference or lukewarmness, in the public cause, but encourage one another in prosecuting the end of their solemn covenant.

"And we leave the consequences of these our contentings and desires to Him who has the disposal of all events, who sits above the floods, and who often hath stretched out his

glorious arm in these isles of the sea, in behalf of the cause of reformation, for which we have all been professing to appear, and who hath said, 'Now will I arise, now will I be exalted, now will I lift up myself, when he seeth their strength is gone, and there is none shut up or left.' May he speedily arise, and have mercy upon Zion.

"ARCH. BRUCE, minister at Whitburn.

"JAMES AITKEN, minister at Kirriemuir.

"JAMES HOG, minister at Kelso.

"THOS. M'CRIE, minister at Edinburgh."\*

The synod delayed the consideration of this paper till their meeting in August; and a complaint being made, that these brethren refused to give attestations to such of their people as were desirous to join in communion with the neighbouring congregations, the synod gave directions that these people be admitted on being certified by their elders, or by other members of the church residing in their neighbourhood. A complaint was at the same time preferred against Mr. Aitken of Kirriemuir, by some of his elders, and others, that he and his session had materially declined subordination to the synod, on the ground of the synod's "public received principles." The synod had not time to enter upon the consideration of this complaint; but they agreed that it should lie upon their table till their next meeting; and Mr. Aitken and his elder (the representative of the session), were cited *apud acta*, to attend.

The four protesting brethren did not wait for the decision of the synod on their declaration, presented on the 7th of May. But when the synod met at Glasgow on the 26th of August (1806), these brethren met at Whitburn on the same day; and after two days spent in conference and prayer, they constituted themselves into a presbytery, under the designation of the *Constitutional Associate Presbytery*. Mr. Bruce presided as moderator on the occasion, and Mr. M'Crie was appointed to officiate as clerk. The reasons assigned by them for taking this step, were the same as those which had already been reiterated in their remonstrances and protests. In their "Deed of Constitution," which was afterwards published, they bewail the defection of the synod in adopting a new Testimony and declaration of principles, in altering the Bond for public covenanting, and in sanctioning a new Formula of questions for entrants into office;—"by which deed," they say,

\* Mr. Whytock, minister at Dalkeith, who had co-operated with these four brethren in their opposition to the synod, was now dead; he died on the 24th of October, 1805.

"some important doctrines in the Confession of Faith, and different articles in their Testimony and principles formerly subscribed, are renounced and dropped, and opposite sectarian errors introduced." What were the important doctrines, which the synod "renounced and dropped," and what the "opposite sectarian errors," which they introduced, they are not pleased to specify. But the chief burden of their lamentation lies in the following passage :—" Particularly, the duty and warrantableness of civil rulers employing their authority in an active support of the interests of religion and the kingdom of Christ, and in promoting reformation (which was an eminent part of the testimony and contendings of the Church of Scotland, in behalf of the reformation of our native land, civil and ecclesiastic, explicitly approved in the Secession), are by the new deeds denied and set aside ; as also, that all covenants of a religious nature, entered into by nations, in their public capacity, or in conjunction with churches, and in so far the National covenant of Scotland, and the Solemn League and covenant of the three kingdoms, in their proper import, matter, and form, as well as in the manner of ratifying and enjoining them, are either directly or by native consequences condemned."

In this document, they find and declare, that the General Associate synod, and inferior judicatories concurring with it, can no longer be acknowledged as faithful, or rightly constituted courts of Christ, and that they can take no share with them in the exercise of government and discipline : it is therefore " warrantable and needful for them to associate together, not only for the administration of the word and sacraments, and for occasional consultations, but also for the regular exercise of government and discipline, as Providence may give them an opportunity." They further modestly affirm, that " their acting in this capacity appears to be no less needful for the support of the public cause, for which they are contending, as otherwise the reformation testimony, in various articles of it, for the maintenance of which the associate judicatories were first constituted, would be in great danger of being dropped and lost for the present in the Associate Body." They also declare, that " though there are some other bodies of presbyterians in this land who profess adherence to the whole doctrine of the Westminster Confession of Faith, and other subordinate standards, and who may be in the main hearty friends to the reformation testimony, and to those articles which are now in a special manner attacked ; yet, as there are none with whom, according to the known state of their public profession, they have freedom presently to form a junction, they reckon themselves shut up to the necessity of meeting

apart; waiting for the time of healing, if haply some bars and offences subsisting among the remaining friends of evangelical truth, and the evangelical interest, may be removed." Further, they adduce their "ordination vows" in vindication of the step which they were now taking. They say, that "by these they acknowledged presbyterian church government and discipline to be of divine institution, and promised 'never to endeavour, directly or indirectly, the prejudice or subversion thereof, but that they would, to the utmost of their power, in their station, during all the days of their life, maintain, support, and defend the same against every other form of government;' which they could not be said to do, if they were to continue in a practical neglect of it, especially at a time when independency, in various shapes, so greatly prevails in this land."

Finally, "in maintaining the public testimony for the interest of Christ, and a dispensation of all his ordinances in conformity to this," they aver that "a regard must be had to the time to come." "As those who are now engaged in contending for truth may soon finish their course, it is incumbent on them to consider to whom the same trust may be committed, and how provision is to be made for those who are, or may be, destitute of the dispensation of public ordinances, agreeably to the Testimony which they have espoused, and to which they can submit with a good conscience. Although they have not hitherto intended, nor have yet resolved to send supply of sermon to those who, in different places, have signified their resolution to adhere to their profession; yet if they should find themselves called to this, and if the Lord see meet to prosper their present attempt, and excite young men, of a faithful and zealous spirit, to offer themselves willingly for the public service of Christ and his scattered flock, they may, by the step which they are now taking, be in a situation to carry into execution the apostolic charge, 'The things which thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also.' They would think that they had failed in their duty, if they declined a measure conducive to the gaining of that important end."

Such are the reasons, which the protesting brethren assign in their "Deed of Constitution," for renouncing their connexion with the General Associate synod, and forming themselves into a separate presbytery under the above designation. On the 28th of August, the synod resumed the consideration of the complaint against Mr. Aitken and his session. The presbytery of Forfar, of which Mr. Aitken was a member, transmitted a paper on this subject from the session of Dundee,

complaining that he had been guilty of various irregularities ; and the presbytery further stated, that they had given Mr. Aitken a citation to attend this meeting of synod. Mr. Aitken, having gone to Whitburn to assist his protesting brethren in forming a "constitutional" presbytery, left the synod to do in his cause what they might see proper. Neither he nor his elder obeyed the summons which had been given. The synod, therefore, were under the necessity of determining the matter in his absence. A long investigation ensued, the result of which was, that the synod found, that Mr. Aitken, and the acting members of his session, had materially declined subordination to the synod ; that they had not obeyed the *apud acta* summons given by the synod, nor the citation of the presbytery of Forfar to attend this meeting, nor sent any excuse ; also that Mr. Aitken had baptized children to persons of other congregations, who had been excluded from communion, and who were still lying under scandal ; and that he had admitted persons to communion from other congregations, without any regular attestation, and others who were lying under a sentence of suspension by the synod ; further, that he had proceeded to an ordination of elders, in opposition to a protest by several of the members of his session, and also by a number of the members of his congregation, and that, in said ordination, he had omitted a principal part of the Formula acknowledged by himself, in not taking those whom he was going to ordain engaged to subjection to any court superior to a session. The synod considered that all this disorderly conduct was aggravated by their having declared their willingness to continue fellowship with him, as expressed in the act prefixed to the Narrative and Testimony, and in the agreement of synod, 7th May, 1805, in which it is declared, "the synod have not prohibited our brethren from receiving into communion persons who better understand or approve of the former statement of our principles." On these grounds Mr. Aitken was pronounced deserving of the censure of the church ; and after mature deliberation, it was agreed to put the question, "Depose, or Suspend ?" when it carried by a considerable majority, "Depose." Mr. Aitken was accordingly deposed from the office of the holy ministry, in connexion with the Secession Church ; and was suspended from all communion in her sealing ordinances. Mr. David Black was appointed to preach at Kirriemuir, and to intimate this sentence to the congregation.

At the same meeting, the attention of the synod was drawn toward the conduct of Messrs. Bruce and M'Crie, by a reference from the presbytery of Edinburgh. In this reference the presbytery stated, that these brethren had absented them-

selves from the meetings of presbytery, without offering any excuse of absence, and when it was known that they were in health and had it in their power to attend; also, that "it was notour," that each of them, since last meeting of synod, had made a statement to his congregation, containing sentiments in opposition to the principles of the General Synod, and tending to produce schism in the association. They further stated, that they had summoned both of these brethren to attend their meeting, which was held at Edinburgh on the 22d of July, to give an account of their conduct; that the brethren had not obeyed the summons, but had sent letters containing answers to the charges which were preferred against them: And the presbytery, considering that Messrs. Bruce and M'Crie, by not attending their meetings nor obeying their summons, appear to decline their authority, unanimously agreed to refer the whole matter for decision to the synod. They gave notice of this reference to these brethren, and summoned them to attend the meeting of synod.

Along with this reference there was presented a paper from Mr. M'Crie's congregation, craving that the synod would consider in what way that congregation might, "consistent with truth," still enjoy the labour of their minister in connexion with the synod; and representing the "necessity of a speedy deliverance from their present distracted condition." Another paper was presented from several people belonging to the same congregation, remonstrating against the statement of the synod's principles contained in the Narrative and Testimony. In connexion with this business, the synod read the paper which had been laid on their table by the protesting brethren at their meeting in May; and they then adjourned the discussion till their next sederunt.

On the following day (the 29th) they resumed the consideration of these papers; and after long deliberation a motion was made, that Messrs. Bruce and M'Crie be suspended from the exercise of their ministry, on the ground that they had given in, at a former meeting, a material declinature of the authority of the synod, and also that they had been pursuing a divisive course by renouncing communion with their brethren. Another motion was made, that the synod should delay inflicting any censure at present; and the votes being taken, it carried, "Delay." From this decision five ministers dissented.

But when the synod met on the 2d of September (being the second week of their meeting), their attention was again called to the conduct of these brethren, by a representation and petition from the elders and members of Mr. M'Crie's congregation, which stated, that at a meeting of session called at the

close of public worship on the preceding Sabbath, Mr. M'Crie had acknowledged that he and the other protesting brethren had met at Whitburn and formed themselves into a presbytery separate from the synod, and not in subordination to it. This fact was attested by the signature of several elders, who declared that they could hold no communion with said presbytery, that they still adhered to the synod in the Lord, and they craved advice and support in their present trying situation.\* The synod having deliberated on this affair, and finding that Mr. M'Crie had, according to his own acknowledgment (as attested by these elders), taken a part in forming a presbytery not in connexion with the synod; taking also into consideration what was recorded concerning him, in their minute of the 29th August, they reversed their former decision, and agreed that they should forthwith inflict censure upon him. The question was put, whether the sentence should be, "Depose" or "Suspend?" and the votes being taken on this question, it carried "Depose." He was accordingly deposed from the office of the holy ministry, and suspended from all communion in the sealing ordinances of the church.

As the synod had no direct evidence before them concerning Messrs. Bruce and Hog, but considered it probable that they were involved in the same charge with Mr. M'Crie, they appointed the presbytery of Kelso to summon Mr. Hog before them on the last day of September, to answer to the charge of having given in to the synod, at their last meeting, a virtual declinature of their authority over him, and of having withdrawn from communion, and also of having formed, along with his protesting brethren, a presbytery "separate from and in opposition to the synod." And should he not appear and give satisfaction on these points, the presbytery were instructed to depose him from the office of the holy ministry. The presbytery of Edinburgh were appointed to meet on the first Tuesday of October, and to proceed in a similar manner with Mr. Bruce; and a committee of ministers was appointed to meet along with the presbytery, and to correspond with them in the determining of this business. In the meantime, the synod declared, that it would be improper to intrust Mr. Bruce any longer with the superintendence of their theological class, as Professor of Divinity. A committee was appointed to prepare an overture, with a view to improve the system of theo-

\* The above account of the proceedings in Mr. M'Crie's case, is taken from the records of synod. It is proper, however, to mention, that Mr. Bruce, in his "Review" of these proceedings, published some time after, states, in opposition to the account thus given, that "there was no meeting of session, only a few words of conversation between Mr. M'Crie and the elders after sermon."

logical teaching; and until such an overture should be prepared, and considered by the synod, the presbyteries were enjoined to take the students under their inspection, in their respective districts; to appoint them to deliver two or more discourses before them, and this was to be regarded as equivalent to attending one session at the Divinity Hall.

When the presbytery of Kelso met on the day appointed by the synod, Mr. Hog, though regularly summoned, did not appear, and the presbytery delayed procedure till another meeting. They prepared an address, which they sent to Mr. Hog, adverting to the points of difference betwixt them; and at the close of it they certified, that if he did not "retract and submit," they would at next meeting proceed to follow out the instructions of the General Synod. These instructions, however, they did not follow out. Though Mr. Hog did not appear at their next meeting, they rested satisfied with merely declaring him highly censurable, and they referred the matter to the synod, that they might inflict upon him what censure they should judge proper. The reason which they assigned, for not pronouncing a sentence of deposition according to the instructions of the synod, was "the present destitute condition of their presbytery." When the reference came before the synod, they found, upon inquiry, that Mr. Hog was in a bad state of health, and they delayed, on this account, pronouncing the sentence of deposition; but they prohibited him from the exercise of his ministry, and they appointed the presbytery to give a supply of sermon to his congregation. A short time after this, Mr. Hog was removed from the scene of his labours by death, which terminated all farther proceedings in his case.

Mr. Bruce did not obey the summons, given him by the synod, to appear before the presbytery of Edinburgh, that he might answer to the charges preferred against him. In answer to the summons, he sent a paper of considerable length reflecting upon the conduct of the synod and presbytery, and declaring his adherence to the protestation and declinature which had already been presented to the synod. The presbytery found that he had been following "a schismatical and disorderly course in having withdrawn from all ministerial and judicial fellowship with them;" that he had given in a material declinature of the authority of the synod; that he had been guilty of contumacy in not obeying the summons which had been given him both by the presbytery and the supreme court, and that, inasmuch as he had not given any denial of the charge of his being a member of a presbytery "separate from and in opposition to the synod," the fact must be considered as admitted by him. On these grounds they

deposed him from the office of the holy ministry, and suspended him from all communion with the church in sealing ordinances, "aye and until he should give satisfactory evidences of his repentance." Mr. Chalmers, minister at Haddington, who was not present at the formation of the "Constitutional Presbytery," but who afterward became a member of it, had a sentence of deposition pronounced upon him by the Edinburgh presbytery soon after this.

Thus terminated the "contentings" concerning the "Old and New Light" question, in so far as the General Associate synod was concerned. In the church courts there was now peace; but the controversy still occupied the attention of the public through the medium of the press. The brethren who had been deposed, considered themselves as occupying the honourable position of "witnesses for the truth:" they looked upon themselves as martyrs suffering in a righteous cause; and they were not slow in making the world acquainted, by means of addresses and pamphlets, with their own merits, and with the grievous wrongs which had been inflicted on them. In an address, which Mr. Bruce delivered to his congregation on the Sabbath immediately after his deposition, he favoured them with a narrative of what had taken place. He alluded, in pathetic terms, to the "rash and violent proceedings" of the General synod at Glasgow, which he characterized as "very different in their spirit and tenor from those of a General Assembly that once met there, so famous in the history of Scotland's Reformation." The former he accused of beating down, "at least indirectly, 'as with axes and hammers,' much of the carved work which the latter were at so much pains and cost then, and afterwards for a series of years, to frame and fix." He adverted to the sufferings of his brethren in the following terms:—"For protesting, and for acting conformably to such protestation, among other things, for the honour and revival of that reformation, as carried on and settled by church and state, in their beautiful conjunction, order, and harmony; and for national covenants and leagues in behalf of it, were two faithful and worthy ministers (whose occasional ministrations, I doubt not, have been, and long will be, savoury to a number of you in this place, and the more so that they have sealed their doctrinal testimonies by their sufferings), were, I say, before that synod rose, sentenced, in their absence, to deposition." He then stated the means which had been employed to expel these ministers from their places of worship, that the people adhering to the synod might retain peaceable possession of them: After which he said with great humility concerning himself, "Amidst such a storm of violence I could not expect to escape; nor did I wish to do

so by any evasive acts, or unjustifiable compliances. I might, indeed, have had reason to suspect that I had failed in duty, or had been dishonoured, if I had not, in such a cause, been made a companion of them who are so used.”\*

These brethren made a loud outcry against the treatment which they had received from the General synod, characterizing it as in the highest degree tyrannical and unjust. In a “Declaration” which they published soon after the formation of their presbytery, they showed that, whatever wrongs were inflicted on them, they were not inclined to bear them meekly. Though the whole system of revealed religion had been renounced by the synod, they could scarcely have employed language more strongly condemnatory of the synod’s conduct, than what we find made use of in this “Declaration.” Speaking of their separation from the synod, they say:—“Additional grounds have been given for this, by the violent measures which have been pursued during the course of this year, in attempting to suppress due ministerial freedom, and violating justice, constitutional principles, and presbyterian order, in the processes managed by the associate judicatories, and the censures which they have pretended to inflict upon the protesting ministers, merely for adherence to their profession, and taking measures to support it, after it was relinquished by the synod; against which censures they had previously protested, and continue to protest, as null and void, and such as, with respect to grounds, manner, and some circumstances accompanying them, will be found unequalled in the presbyterian church, as a detail of facts (were it proper here to give it), would, they doubt not, make it evident to the impartial world. By their conduct in this matter, the guilt of the judicatories has been highly aggravated; they have crowned their defection by persecuting those who opposed it, and have aimed a deadly stroke not only against the character and usefulness of a few ministers, but against the public cause for which they were contending.”†

By giving a faithful narrative of the proceedings which led to the separation of these brethren, I have furnished my readers with the means of judging how far such language as that now quoted was warranted by any part of the procedure of the General Associate synod. The conduct of the synod toward those brethren who did not go along with them in the remodelling of the Testimony, and in the various steps that were rendered necessary by this measure, was in the highest degree forbearing. They granted them all facilities for ex-

\* Appendix to the Review of the proceedings of the General Associate Synod, &c. by Professor Bruce. P. 406.

† Declaration appended to Mr. M’Crie’s Statement of Difference, &c. P. 216.

*operation* (according to the technical language of the day), by permitting them to dissent, protest, or remonstrate as oft as they pleased. They expressed their readiness to hold communion with them, notwithstanding any diversity of sentiment that might exist between them with regard to the points at issue. They were quite willing, not only that their brethren should hold their own peculiar views on these points, but that they should also be at liberty to receive into their communion persons who might "better understand or approve of the former statement of their principles." The only prohibition which they laid upon them was, that they should not impugn or oppose, either from the pulpit or the press, the received principles of the synod. This prohibition was reasonable in itself, and was necessary for maintaining the peace and unity of the church. But none of these things would satisfy the remonstrants. They withdrew from the meetings of presbytery; they refused to hold communion with their brethren on sacramental occasions. By the circulation of papers, and by addresses from the pulpit, they endeavoured to prejudice the minds of the people against the synod; and they disregarded the summons of those ecclesiastical judicatories, to which they had promised subjection in the Lord. At length they gave in a paper, virtually declining the authority of the supreme court; and a short while after, they constituted themselves into a separate presbytery, in opposition to the synod.

Such being the state of matters between the General Associate synod and the remonstrating brethren, there were only two courses which the synod could pursue. The one was, to permit these brethren to act in whatever way they pleased, without taking any notice of their conduct; the other was, to call them to an account for their conduct, and to inflict on them such discipline as the circumstances of the case might require. To have adopted the first of these, would scarcely have been compatible with the maintenance of their authority as an ecclesiastical court, and would moreover have been inconsistent with that fidelity which it behoved them to exercise toward all their members. That the synod were under the necessity of taking judicial notice of the conduct of these ministers who had set themselves up in opposition to their authority, is what few will be inclined to deny. Forbearance, in all societies, must have its limits; and it was certainly not to be expected that forbearance could continue to be exercised toward these persons, after that the synod received information of their having formed themselves into a separate ecclesiastical court. That the sentence of deposition, however, ought to have been inflicted on them, I am not inclined to admit. All

that appears to have been necessary, was to suspend them from the exercise of their ministry, in connexion with the synod, until that they should make due acknowledgment for the part which they had acted. In the case of Mr. M'Crie, also, I admit that the sentence was too hastily pronounced. Whether he choose to avail himself of it or not, an opportunity ought at least to have been given of making such explanation or vindication of his conduct, as might appear to himself proper. A summons had indeed been given him by the presbytery to appear before the synod, and he refused to obey it; but he had a right to expect that the synod, before pronouncing upon him the sentence of deposition, should have summoned him before them, to answer for that part of his conduct, on account of which such sentence was chiefly pronounced.

With regard to the other ministers, they had no reason to complain of any injustice done to them in this respect. Mr. Aitken's case, which was distinct from the rest, was delayed from one meeting to another, and he was formally summoned to attend, but he chose to disobey. Messrs. Bruce and Hog were equally disobedient; for both of them were summoned, by authority of synod, to appear before their respective presbyteries, and answer to certain specified charges; but none of them appeared in obedience to the summons, and they could not, therefore, have any fair ground of complaint, should sentence be pronounced against them in their absence. Mr. Hog's presbytery was lenient to him. The presbytery, of which Mr. Bruce was a member, acted in strict conformity with the directions given them by the supreme court.

It is a question which will present itself to the minds of many,—What had the General Associate synod done, that these few ministers, whose names have been so often mentioned, should consider it an imperative duty to renounce their communion, and form themselves into a separate religious society? Had the synod become less sound in the faith? Had they become less faithful in their exhibition of the pure doctrines of the gospel? Had they become more relaxed in their discipline? Had they shown any inclination to tolerate either heresy or immorality amongst their members? No such charge was ever preferred against them. What, then, were they guilty of, that there should be so many dissents, and protests, and remonstrances presented against their proceedings, and at last a complete separation made from their communion?

So far as I have been able to glean from the writings of the separating brethren, the following were the chief grounds of complaint preferred by them against the synod:—

*First*, In remodelling their Testimony, the synod did not

take "the original Secession Testimony," but the scriptures, for their guide; and they did not designate it by the old title of "Act, Declaration, and Testimony, for the Doctrine, Worship, Discipline, and Government of the Church of Scotland," &c.; but they simply styled it, "Narrative and Testimony agreed upon and enacted by the General Associate synod." It was hence inferred, that the new Testimony must be different from the old, and this was made the ground of a charge against the synod. "The Testimony itself," says Mr. M'Crie in his Statement,\* "or, as it is otherwise denominated, 'the Testimony properly so called,' is evidently very different from the original Secession Testimony. The last-mentioned, we have seen, was formally and specifically a testimony for the religious profession of the reformed Church of Scotland, or for the true religion, as attained by, and fixed in that church. The new Testimony is drawn up upon the principle, that the church's testimony ought to be taken immediately from the scriptures, without a reference to the attainments of former times,—an opinion repeatedly pleaded for by its compilers, and evidently acted upon in the present instance. Accordingly, the doctrines asserted in it are asserted simply as agreeable, and the doctrines condemned as contrary, to the word of God, without viewing them in their reference to the Confession of Faith, and other subordinate standards, and even without mentioning any of these, except perhaps, in an incidental way, in an instance or two. Besides, it contains doctrines that are contradictory to those of the Confession of Faith, and which were never received into the confession or terms of communion of this or any other presbyterian church. In all these respects, it is different from the original Testimony of Seceders, and cannot be looked upon as a testimony for the doctrine, &c. of the Church of Scotland, in any other sense than as it may contain materially the same truths, in most instances, with our Confession and Catechisms; which is true as to the confessions or declared principles of different religious bodies, and even of those of independent persuasions."

This is certainly a singular charge to bring against a protestant church court, that it should act upon the principle of taking its testimony "immediately from the scriptures, without a reference to the attainments of former times;" and that it should assert, or condemn, doctrines "simply as agreeable or contrary to the word of God, without viewing them in their reference to the Confession of Faith, and other subordinate standards." The General Associate synod were accused of acting upon this principle; and most men will consider that

they were entitled to praise, rather than blame, for such Christian conduct. They honestly avowed the principle upon which they acted, when they declared, "The foundation upon which we rest the whole of our ecclesiastical constitution, is the testimony of God in his word. That main pillar of the Reformation, 'That the Bible contains the whole religion of protestants,' we adopt for our fundamental principle, and build upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner-stone." "We call no man nor church, Master. One is our Master, even Christ, and his word our only unerring rule. 'To the law and to the testimony, if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them.' " \* Though the charge were true, that the testimony "contains doctrines that are contradictory to those of the Confession of Faith, and which were never received into the confession or terms of communion of this or any other presbyterian church," no candid person will say that this could form a just ground of complaint against the synod. For the question is not, whether these doctrines "are contradictory to those of the Confession of Faith," but, "Are they contradictory to the word of God?" There was certainly nothing morally wrong in the General Associate synod altering any part of their Testimony, for the purpose of making it express views which they considered to be more in accordance with Scripture, than those maintained by the compilers of former presbyterian confessions.

*Secondly,* The synod gave a decided expression of their opinion with regard to the unlawfulness of the connexion between church and state. They declare, that "Christian magistrates have no power to give laws to the church; to appoint her office-bearers, or dictate to them in the discharge of their office; to prescribe a confession of faith, or form of worship, to the church, or their subjects in general; authoritatively to call meetings of church judicatories, in ordinary cases, or to direct or control them in their judicial procedure: In matters purely religious, civil rulers have no right to judge for any but themselves." They testified "against all such conjunction of church and state, as subjects the state to the church in civil matters, or the church to the state in those that are religious."† The avowal of these and similar sentiments, formed another ground of complaint against the synod, on the part of the separating brethren. The following extract from the "Statement" already referred to,‡ will show in what

\* Testimony, p. 9.

† Testimony, pp. 195, 196.

‡ M'Crie's Statement of the Difference, &c., pp. 79, 80.

respects the views which they held on this point differed from those of the synod.

After affirming "that Christ is the sole Head of the church, that he has an exclusive right to appoint all her laws and ordinances of worship and service, that all administrations in his house are to be performed in his name and by his authority, and that his servants, in the proper line of their office, do not act by the authority of, or by delegation from, any earthly prince or legislature, so as to receive and execute their mandates, or be responsible to them in their ministrations," the writer, speaking in his own name, and in the name of his brethren, says:—"But, in full consistency with these principles, they think they can maintain, that civil authority may be lawfully and beneficially employed in the advancement of religion and the kingdom of Christ. The care of religion, in the general view of it (in which respect the consideration of it is previous to that of the form which it assumes in consequence of supernatural revelation, and the erection of a church state), belongs to the magistrate's office; and it is his duty to watch over its external interests, and to exert himself, in his station, to preserve upon the minds of his subjects an impression of its obligations and sanctions, and to suppress irreligion, impiety, profanity, and blasphemy. It is also the duty of civil rulers, and must be their interest, to exert themselves to introduce the gospel into their dominions, when it may be but partially enjoyed; and, by salutary laws and encouragements, to provide them with the means of instruction, and a settled dispensation of ordinances, especially in poor and desolate, or in ignorant and irreligious, parts of the country; all which they may do without propagating Christianity by the sword, or forcing a profession of religion on their subjects by penal laws. When religion has become corrupt, after it has been received and established in a nation, and has degenerated into a system of falsehood, superstition, idolatry, and tyranny, carried on by churchmen, aided by the civil powers; and where various abuses of this kind are interwoven with the civil constitution and administration, an eminent exercise of civil authority is requisite for the reformation of these; not by the abolition of all laws respecting religion, as a matter which civil government has no concern with, and by leaving every thing to individual exertion, or voluntary associations, which would only breed anarchy and endless disorder; but by magistrates taking an active part in prosecuting a public reformation, removing external hinderances, correcting published and established abuses, allowing, and in some cases calling together and supporting, ecclesiastical assemblies for settling the internal affairs of the church and of religion, 'that unity and peace

may be preserved,' &c. ; as was done by the rulers of different countries at the period of the reformation from popery, and in Britain at the time of the Westminster Assembly. In an ordinary state of matters, they also judge that it is the duty of civil rulers to maintain and support the interests of religion, and the kingdom of Christ, by publicly recognising and countenancing its institutions, giving the legal sanction to a public profession or confession of its faith, a particular form of worship and ecclesiastical discipline, which are ratified as national; and by making public and permanent provision for the religious instruction of their subjects, and the maintenance of divine ordinances among them."

Though these views differed materially from those which the synod expressed, in reference to the magistrate's power in matters of religion, yet the synod declared their willingness to exercise forbearance with their brethren on this point. They did not prohibit them from receiving into their communion persons who might "better understand or approve of the former statement of their principles:" And certainly it was not imposing on them any thing unreasonable or oppressive, when they were required to exercise forbearance on their part. This forbearance they would not exercise. They preferred forming themselves into a separate society; and it may safely be left to an impartial posterity to judge between them and the synod in this matter.

*Thirdly,* The synod refused to blend things civil and sacred in their public religious covenanting; and this formed another ground of complaint against them. That my readers may judge of the difference between the synod and their brethren, on this point, I shall quote the language of both parties. The synod declared, "That public religious covenanting is the deed of a number of church members, in which they jointly and publicly profess, to renounce all hope of life from the covenant of works; to take hold of the covenant of grace, and to devote themselves to the Lord, and in the strength of promised grace, engage faithfully to cleave to him, to hold fast his truth, to perform the various duties which they owe to God and man, in their respective stations and relations, and to strengthen one another's hands in the work of the Lord." They declared further, "That there is a great difference between civil and religious covenants. In the former, an appeal is made to God, as the Moral Governor and Judge of the world. In the latter, we come under engagements to him, as our God, and the God of his church. In a civil covenant, we, in a civil character, enter into or seal an obligation with respect to things merely temporal. In a religious covenant, we, as spiritual priests, 'present our bodies as a living sacrifice unto

God.' Although, in New Testament times, a whole nation should join in this duty, it could be viewed in no other light than that of an extensive church, including all the individuals who constitute the nation, as, in their spiritual character, devoting themselves and their seed to the Lord." "In using such expressions as these, *church* and *church-members*, the synod does not mean that persons cannot, in any case, warrantably enter into religious covenants, except under the direction of ecclesiastical courts, or as formally met as a worshipping assembly; but that it is incumbent on men in their character as members of the Church of Christ, and not in their civil character. as members of the state." \*

According to these views of the synod, covenanting was regarded by them as a religious ordinance, to be performed by the church, and having respect solely to matters of a religious nature. The separating brethren, on the other hand, considered it "as a kind of civil and political transaction, or at least as a politico-ecclesiastical one, to be performed by men in a civil character, and in which they are to make matters of a civil nature, the matter of their covenant engagements." In the remonstrances which they presented to the synod, they referred to the synod's account of covenanting, in the following terms:—"A very different account should have been given of it. It (covenanting) is not incumbent on men properly, either in their ecclesiastical character, or in their civil character, but as men and as subjects of the moral law, and that law extends to them in every character they sustain. Accordingly, some of the duties engaged to, may be immediately connected with their ecclesiastical character, and others peculiar to their civil character. What, then, can be the reason of all this zeal to set the one character against the other? Is it to show the mistake of blending civil and religious things in the Solemn League, or to expose the absurdity of the covenanters describing themselves by names and titles belonging to their civil character? Certainly, if no other account was to be made of them than as they sustained the character of church-members, these titles and designations were highly improper." Again, "The doctrine of this new Testimony, on the subject of public vows and covenants, and the application of it to the covenants of our ancestors, afford another important and complicated cause of remonstrance. Covenanting, in the general, is improperly described, and limited to one species of it, to the exclusion of other modes of it equally warrantable: and explicit, formal, occasional, and extraordinary covenants and vows are not properly distinguished from engagements or

\* Testimony, pp. 161, 154.

implicit covenanting, belonging to all Christian churches, or the religious exercises generally performed in them. In the latter sense, which is that of the definition, there is no propriety of charging other parties in the land, as is done in the Narrative, with denying or totally neglecting this duty. These duties are not founded on the broad basis of the moral law, as applicable to mankind in all their various stations and relations, but are confined to men as under the evangelical covenant, whose obligation arises from revelation. National compacts, and oaths between kings and subjects, relating to religion, promissory oaths concerning the faithful administration of offices and duties, treaties and leagues between cities, princes, and kingdoms, in which religious interests may be partly the subject, and in which men act in another character than that which is merely ecclesiastical, are upon the matters exploded. The most noted leagues and associations, in which religion and reformation have been deeply interested, in other lands, and in Britain, must be accounted unlawful, and not obligatory. The attempt to settle the extent and permanency of the obligation of the National and Solemn League on posterity, merely upon the morality of the duties, or the permanency of a church state, is altogether inadequate. The common and very conclusive argument for the national and perpetual obligation of them, taken from the public capacity in which they were sworn, and repeatedly ratified, and the permanency of the national and political state of the three kingdoms, is hereby lost and intentionally given up.\*

Such were the different views entertained by the synod, and by those who separated from them, on the subject of public covenanting. Though the difference of opinion on this point had been much greater than it really was, it certainly did not form a valid ground for the latter withdrawing from the communion of the former. The latter, indeed, affirmed that this was not a speculative question, but "a practical point of deep and serious consideration."† I can find no evidence that those who held this "practical point of deep and serious consideration," acted, either as Christians or men, in any respect different from their brethren who did not hold it; and it is difficult to conceive in what sense that can be called a "practical point," which has no apparent influence upon the practice of those who maintain it. The one class were as faithful and diligent in preaching the gospel, in opposing error, in suppressing vice, and in promoting the

\* The above quotations are given, as extracted from the first and second remonstrances, by the Rev. Alexander Allan (of Cupar-Angus), in his book on the "Power of the civil magistrate," &c. pp. 106, 107.

† M'Crie's Statement, p. 197.

interests of godliness, as the other ; and to withdraw from the communion of good men, because they did not approve of blending things civil and sacred in religious covenanting, and because they did not approve of the conduct of their sires in doing so, was making a division in the church on grounds which those who calmly and impartially consider the matter, will pronounce to be insufficient.

On a review of the whole proceedings which have been narrated in this chapter, it will be found that the General Associate synod acted with great caution and deliberation in revising their Testimony, and other official documents ; that they treated the remonstrating brethren with much indulgence, showing no disposition to exercise discipline, until that these brethren manifested a spirit of insubordination, and had actually commenced pursuing a divisive course ; and, finally, that the sentiments which they expressed on the subject of the magistrate's power, in matters of religion, and also on the subject of covenanting, were not new in the Secession church. Among the persons who may peruse this narrative, a diversity of opinion will of course exist, as to whether the sentiments which the synod expressed on these subjects were right or wrong. Many there are who will vindicate these sentiments with all their heart ; others will reject them with a pious abhorrence. Each individual has an equal right to hold, and to express his sentiments on these controverted points ; and I shall not quarrel with any one who may choose to affirm (in opposition to my own opinion), that the views of the synod, on these points, were erroneous. But whether erroneous or not, the synod, in giving utterance to them, were doing nothing more than embodying sentiments which had long prevailed in the Secession Church, and which had already found a place in her official papers. Though the synod, on this occasion, gave a more full, clear, and explicit declaration of them, than had previously been given, yet the avowal of them formerly made, had been sufficiently distinct, so as to render utterly groundless the charge which has been ignorantly preferred against the Secession, of having made a change of principle in this respect. The language of the Associate Presbytery, in their Answers to Mr. Nairn, has been quoted in a former part of this work ;\* but it is necessary here again to advert to it ; for it bears most decidedly upon the point at present under consideration ; it furnishes a convincing proof that the ministers of the Secession were equally opposed to the interference of the civil magistrate, in matters of religion, in 1743, when the Answers to Mr. Nairn were prepared, as

\* Page 187.

they were in 1804, when the new Testimony was enacted. The presbytery declared, "True religion is not only the church's blessing, but her very substance; so that true religion and a true church cannot be divided. Now, if true religion became a part of the civil constitution, it inevitably follows that the church became a part of the state; which doctrine, as it is absurd in itself, so it lays a plain foundation for erastianism, overturning the distinction betwixt the kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the kingdoms of this world. Moreover, if the true religion (which is spiritual and supernatural), became a part of the civil constitution, then it could no longer remain a *civil*, but became a *religious*, a spiritual, a supernatural constitution." They further declared, that "the public good of outward and common order, in all reasonable society, unto the glory of God, is the great and only end which those invested with magistracy can propose, in a sole respect unto that office. And as, in prosecuting this end civilly, according to their office, it is only over men's good and evil works that they can have any inspection; so it is only over these which they must needs take cognizance of, for the said public good; while, at the same time, their doing so must be in such a manner, and proceed so far alienarly, as is requisite for that end, without assuming any lordship immediately over men's consciences, or making any encroachment upon the special privileges and business of the church." No sophistry nor wrangling can explain away the literal meaning of these declarations; and no ingenuity can extract from them any other doctrine, than that which is decidedly hostile to the alliance between church and state.

But as this application of them was disputed by those brethren who left the synod, I shall quote the interpretation which was given of them by the person from whose pen the Answers to Mr. Nairn proceeded, or at least who took an active part in preparing them: and, when an author tells us what is the meaning of his own language, we are certainly bound to receive his interpretation as the just one. The writer to whom I refer, is the Reverend Adam Gib, who was a member of the Associate Presbytery, during the period of their controversy with Mr. Nairn. In 1774, he published his "Display of the Secession Testimony;" and, in a note appended to that work, he makes the following remarks on the above declarations:—"The writer of this account is the only person now remaining in the Associate synod, who had special occasion to be acquainted with the precise intention upon which the several terms of the above paragraphs (with the other terms of this declaration and defence), were originally laid. He does not mean any other intention than what the words themselves,

when properly weighed, do naturally and necessarily suggest. But as this may not be so readily adverted unto, in a cursory reading of what is purposely concise and comprehensive, he offers the following paraphrase and explanation of it.

“ 1. The great end of magistracy is the *public good* of society;\* distinguished from all interfering private interests. The public good of *outward order* ; as not versant, like the gospel ministry, about the disorders of men’s hearts ; and the public good of common order in all *reasonable* society, not only in the general society of the nation, or commonwealth, but also in all the particular societies comprehended within the same, civil or religious, so far as these do not strike, according to the principles of right reason, against the peace and welfare of the general society ; that each may enjoy the benefit of the magistrate’s office, for preserving such order as is common to all, according as each partakes of the common nature of society. And this *great* end of the magistrate’s office, is the *only* end that he *can* propose ; that he can equitably and justly propose, in a *sole* respect unto that office, whatever other good ends he may propose to himself, in respect to any other character which he bears. All which public good is ultimately *unto the glory of God*, as the universal Sovereign of the world ; an acknowledgment of whose being and government lies at the root of all confidence and duty in human society ; while this acknowledgment is also made, at least materially, in all that maintenance of good order.

“ 2. These invested with magistracy are to prosecute the above-mentioned end of their office, according to the nature of it, *civilly*, in such ways as agree to the nature of civil society, without subordinating any religious institutions or ordinances to that end. In doing which, it is *only* over men’s good and evil *works* (comprehending works of the tongue as well as hand), that they can have any inspection, without pretending to any control of men’s judgments, hearts, or thoughts ; and this inspection is *only* over these good and evil works of men, which they must needs take cognizance of, for the *said* public good ; so that they are not to interfere with any of men’s works, in which the public good of society is not properly concerned. At the same time, their jurisdiction about men’s works, must be in *such* a manner, and proceed *so far only* as is requisite for the said public good, only in a civil manner, as above expressed, and without proceeding so far as to serve the purposes of resentment or private interest, beside or beyond the public good. Thus the magistrate must not assume any lordship immediately over men’s *consciences*, in offering to make

\* The italics that occur in these quotations are Mr. Gib’s.

himself a judge of men's religious principles; nor must he encroach upon the *special privileges* and *business* of the church, by assuming a cognizance of men's religious conduct or behaviour, farther than the public good of society is concerned, while all other cognizance thereof belongs particularly to the church state.

"3. It is to be considered, that the whole institution of the magistrate's office lies in *natural principles*, being no way founded in the revelation of grace, nor at all peculiar to such as enjoy the benefit of that revelation. And, accordingly, the whole end of his office must be understood as *cut out by* the same natural principles; so that it cannot, in any part or degree, extend beyond the compass thereof. It were, therefore, *absurd* to suppose, that *any exercise* of that office were competent unto, or incumbent upon, the civil magistrate, precisely as such, other than what can be *argued for* and *defended* from *natural principles*, without having recourse to any principles of revealed religion for the rule or measure of his magistratical administration.

"But all this is obviously meant of what the magistrate owes unto all his subjects in common; and of how he is to proceed with them, by way of necessary jurisdiction: that, in all such matters, his procedure is not to be according to the rule or measure of revealed, but of natural, principles; whereas, in matters which are optional and arbitrary to the supreme magistrate, with respect to his subjects, and what must be confined to some of them, as the employing of persons in public trust under him (which none can claim as their natural or birth right, nor can justly complain of an encroachment upon any such right, by their not being so employed): The Christian magistrate ought to determine himself, not merely by natural but also by revealed or Christian principles; while all the concerns of earthly kingdoms, with all the influence that is competent to every civil station, so far as consistent with the nature thereof, should be subservient to the kingdom of Christ; and this is the case as to all that countenancing and encouraging of the true friends of the Christian state, which he is very eminently and effectually capable of; with all the discountenancing and discouraging of the enemies of that state, which he is as eminently and effectually capable of, without any encroachment on their natural or birth-right privileges, upon religious accounts." \*

Such are the sentiments which, according to Mr. Gib, were held by the Associate Presbytery, nearly an hundred years ago, on the subject of the magistrate's power. The

\* Gib's Display, vol. i. p. 312, &c.

public good of "*outward order*," and of "*common order*," "in all reasonable society," was declared to be the *sole* end of his office. This end, those invested with the magistracy are to prosecute *civilly*, "in such ways as agree to the nature of civil society, *without subordinating any religious institutions or ordinances to that end*." They are not to assume "any lordship immediately over men's consciences," nor offer to make themselves "judges of men's religious principles," nor encroach "upon the special privileges and business of the church." The *whole institution* of their office "lies in *natural principles*, being no way founded in the revelation of grace, nor at all peculiar to such as enjoy the benefit of that revelation." Accordingly, "the whole end of it must be understood as *cut out* by the same natural principles, so that it cannot, *in any part or degree*, extend beyond the compass thereof." These were the sentiments of the Associate Presbytery. They are sufficiently plain, and coincide very closely with those that, in later times, have been expressed by writers on the Voluntary Church question. While such sentiments as these are on record, in the official documents of the Secession Church, published soon after the commencement of the Secession, it is not fair to bring the charge of apostacy, perjury, and infidelity against the present race of Seceders, for avowing similar opinions.

When a motion was made by a venerable father of the Associate synod, in the year 1759, and afterwards repeated in the years 1760 and 1761, that an address be presented to the king, by the synod, complaining of the religious grievances that prevailed in the land, and calling upon him for a redress of the same, only two individuals (the mover and the seconder), could be found to support the motion;\* and, to show that the motion was rejected on the ground of the prevailing sentiments of the synod being unfavourable to the interference of the civil magistrate, in matters of religion, I quote the following language from a speech which Mr. Adam Gib made against the motion, and which he afterwards published at the request of his brethren. One of the arguments brought forward in favour of the motion was, "That the generation have neither will, nor the proper power, to set about public reformation, and that warnings given them are quite neglected and despised by the bulk of these lands;" and that, therefore, application ought to be made directly to the king, and other rulers, for interposing their authority and power. To this argument Mr. Gib replied:—

'Such an argument seems to make directly against the

motion, unless we should ascribe to the civil magistrate an erastian sort of power, to choose people's religion for them, and impose it upon them, whether they will or not. Besides, in a free country, where only the free religion can thrive, this way of reformation cannot be supposed practicable by the civil magistrate, though it were competent to him. And as our rulers claim no power but what comes from the people, it can never be properly used against the body of the people; however good in itself the end might be for which it were so used. If, then, we would judge what the rulers have a power to do, in public matters, we must judge of it from what the body of the people are justly disposed to have done. And one may look on all the magisterial ways of civil power and authority, as being none of God's ordinances for reclaiming a backsliding generation from a course of prevailing errors and corruptions about the matters of revealed religion.\* In another part of his speech, he adds, "If there could be a time for any such application to civil powers as is now proposed, it would seem to have been in the first period of the gospel; when apostles were employed to fight against the fashionable corruptions of the world, in propagating the Christian religion. Men who had a universal commission for that end were privileged with supernatural assistance and infallible conduct in the matter; and who were endued with a power of working miracles, by which their authority could easily be documented to earthly powers, wherever needful. But, in all the course of their ministry, they made no such application to these powers. They never called in the assistance of the secular arm against the prevailing abominations, whatever advantages they had for doing so, from the universality of their commission, and the miraculous powers with which it was accompanied. Our Lord did not see meet to make choice of that *secular way* for promoting the interests of his kingdom. It cannot be said, that we have any more of a providential intercourse with civil powers than the apostles had, or even near so much as some of them. And Christian magistrates can have no more need of being dealt with about the true religion, than heathen magistrates had: Nor can ordinary ministers have a further warrant to deal with the one sort, than apostles had to deal with the other."†

Thirty-six years after this speech had been delivered by Mr. Gib, the General Associate synod had become almost thoroughly imbued with the sentiments which the speech contains. A deep and wide-spread conviction prevailed, that the power of the civil magistrate ought not to be exercised about matters

\* Display, vol. ii. p. 241.

† Ibid. p. 242.

of religion. Students when receiving licence, ministers and elders at their ordination, and the people when joining the church, or receiving baptism for their children, objected to the doctrine of the Confession of Faith on this subject; and refused, on this ground, to give unqualified assent to the doctrines contained in the Confession. It was the extensive prevalence of these scruples, and a desire to remove them, that led the synod to issue that decided declaration, in 1796, of which mention has been already made.\* By this declaration, they gave full permission to all their members to make exception to every thing in the Confession, which, taken by itself, seemed to allow the punishment of good and peaceable subjects on account of their religious opinions and observances; and they disavowed all other means of bringing men into the church, or retaining them in it, "than such as are spiritual, and were used by the apostles and other ministers of the word in the first ages of the Christian church, persuasion, not force; the power of the gospel, not the sword of the civil magistrate."

From the statements made in this and in the preceding pages, it will appear that the synod's doctrine in their new Testimony, on the subject of the magistrate's power, was not new in the Secession Church, especially in that branch of it with which they were more immediately connected. Only they made a more full and explicit declaration of their sentiments, on this question, than had previously been done. There was no need, therefore, for so much lamentation being made upon the subject, as if the synod, in doing what they did, had been guilty of demolishing the whole foundation of the Christian church. On the subject of covenanting, the synod showed themselves a little in advance of the Associate Presbytery. When the presbytery, in 1743, passed an act for "renewing our covenants," they declared, that "it was not suitable to their present circumstances, to blend civil and ecclesiastic matters in the oath of God;" assigning as a reason for this, that "the cognizance of civil affairs did not properly belong to them as a church judicatory." Their refusal "to blend civil and ecclesiastic matters in the oath of God" was not founded on the impropriety of the thing itself, but was qualified by their declaration, "that it was not suitable to their *present circumstances*." But the General Associate synod inserted no such qualifying clause as this. They seemed to think that the blending of things civil and sacred in religious covenanting was unsuitable in *any* circumstances. They regarded covenanting "as a religious ordinance to be

\* See page 381.

performed by the church, and having a respect *solely* to matters of a religious nature." In this respect, the views entertained by the synod must be considered as more enlightened than those entertained by the presbytery.

Thus have I given a particular account of the proceedings in the General Associate Synod, which terminated in the formation of another branch of the Secession. The points of difference between the synod and those brethren who withdrew from its communion have been fully stated. Subsequent events have given to these points a more than ordinary importance; and this has led me to dwell upon them more largely than I would otherwise have done. A controversy has now been carrying on for several years in this country, involving exactly the same points as those to which the attention of the reader has been directed in the preceding part of the narrative; and the proceedings detailed in this chapter will show, that, in so far as the Secession Church is concerned, this controversy is not new. The Secession, in contending for the entire emancipation of the church of Christ from the authority of the state, and in pleading for voluntary churches, is merely carrying into effect principles which have been held by it, or at least by one section of it, for a considerable period.

The division occasioned in the general synod, by the adopting of the new Testimony, was very insignificant. Not more than five ministers (exclusive of Mr. Whytock, who died during the progress of the controversy), left the synod in consequence of it; and, during the period of forty years which have elapsed since the division took place, this portion of the Secession has made comparatively little progress. Notwithstanding the coalition which it has effected with that portion of the General Associate synod, that did not join the union so happily accomplished between the two large bodies of the Secession, it has never been able to gain much ground in the country. It is pleasing, however, to add concerning it, that the gospel has been faithfully and ably preached in its pulpits, and that it has ranked amongst the number of its ministers, some who have been distinguished both as scholars and as Christians; and who, by their varied labours, have rendered essential service to the cause both of literature and of religion.

## CHAPTER XIV.

Course of theological study enlarged—Mr. George Paxton elected Professor of Divinity—Released from his pastoral charge—Seat of Divinity Hall in Edinburgh—Discussions concerning Regium Donum in Ireland—Decision of the Synod on this subject—Resolution concerning ministers' stipends—Agree to open a correspondence with other evangelical denominations—Committee of correspondence appointed concerning congregations—Process against Mr. Imrie of Kinkell—Articles of libel—Findings of Synod—Mr. Imrie rebuked and suspended—Mr. Imrie's declaration—Sentence of suspension removed—Twenty-one ministers and four elders protest against this decision—Decision reviewed—And reversed—Nine ministers and one elder dissent—New process against Mr. Imrie—Several articles of heresy proved—Mr. Imrie deposed—Protests, and declines the authority of Synod—Transatlantic missions—Resolutions of the Associate Synod of Philadelphia respecting the holding of slaves—Union of presbyterians in Nova Scotia—Missions to the Highlands of Scotland—Aid granted to the Irish Evangelical Society.

THE General Associate synod, at every period of their history, showed a laudable desire to give respectability and efficiency to their ministry, by making such improvements in their course of theological study, as were required by the growing spirit of the times. While they were anxious, on the one hand, to guard their students against the contamination of prevailing errors, they were no less eager, on the other, to afford them every facility that their circumstances would admit of, for making progress in the various departments of literature, as well as in the acquisition of sound theological knowledge. The separation of Mr. Bruce from their communion, and his consequent deposition from the office of the ministry, had left their theological chair vacant; and they considered this a fit opportunity for reviewing the course of study which had hitherto been pursued by candidates for the sacred office. It has been already stated, that a committee was appointed by them to take this subject into consideration. After receiving the report of the committee, the synod resolved that their Professor of Divinity should give such a summary view of the system, as might be accomplished in the course of five years; that he should examine the students particularly on the subject of his lectures; that each session should continue at least ten weeks, and that the Professor should usually deliver five lectures in the week; that the attendance of the students at the Divinity Hall should be five sessions, and that every student should deliver two discourses during each session; that the Professor should make an annual report to the synod of the

number of students enrolled, and his opinion respecting the capacity and progress of each, and the synod would consider what course ought to be adopted with regard to those that were careless or incapable. They further resolved, that a second Professor should be appointed to take charge of the students of philosophy, so soon as the necessary funds could be procured. An address was prepared and circulated among the congregations, the object of which was to raise, by collections and donations, a sum of money sufficient to create a permanent fund for defraying the necessary expenses connected with the theological institution, and also to give assistance to young men of talents and piety, in the prosecution of their studies. Though a considerable sum of money was collected, yet the fund never increased to such an extent as to enable the synod to realize all the objects contemplated by it.

On the 30th of April, 1807, Mr. George Paxton, minister at Kilmaurs, was appointed Professor of Divinity, and commenced his labours in September following. From the commencement of the Secession, all those individuals who had been appointed to fill, in succession, the theological chair, in addition to their labours as Professor, had also to discharge the varied duties connected with the superintendence of a congregation; though it was customary for the synod to afford them a supply of preachers for their pulpit during the weeks they were engaged in teaching the students. After the appointment of Mr. Paxton to the professorship, a new arrangement was made in this respect. It was declared, that the holding of a double charge was inconsistent with the proper discharge of the arduous duties attached, by the new regulations, to the office of Professor. The relation betwixt Mr. Paxton and the congregation of Kilmaurs was dissolved, and he was required to take up his residence in Edinburgh, where the seat of the Divinity Hall was fixed. His salary was fixed first at £150, and afterward at £200, per annum. Being thus released from the harassing toils connected with the oversight of a congregation, and having sufficient leisure to prosecute his biblical and theological researches, he was enabled to give to the students under his charge a much more extended and improved course of prelections than he could otherwise have done. In addition to his labours, in conducting the business of the theological seminary, during the appointed weeks of each session, he agreed to take the oversight of those young men, connected with the synod, who might be prosecuting their studies at the College of Edinburgh, during the winter months. By holding frequent meetings with them for religious purposes, and by giving them direction and instruction in those branches of literature which they were engaged in studying

at the University, he both facilitated their progress in learning, and guarded them, at the same time, against adopting those fashionable and pernicious errors, with which young minds are too apt to be fascinated, while attending such public seminaries. The synod enjoined all the students in their connexion, who were attending the College of Edinburgh, to wait upon the Professor for these purposes, as often as he should find it convenient to meet with them.

A considerable degree of excitement prevailed in many of the Secession congregations in Ireland, about this period, in consequence of alterations made in the mode of distributing the Regium, or Royal Bounty. At an early period, grants of money had been given from the exchequer for the support of the Presbyterian ministers in the north of Ireland. The sum originally given was small, but it gradually increased, until it attained the amount of many thousands annually.\* Soon after the commencement of the present century, a new method of distributing it was adopted by the government. Instead of a sum total being given to each section of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland, to be divided according to the pleasure of the synods, amongst the ministers of their own connexion, it was determined that the bounty should be given to each minister, according to a certain scale. The congregations were arranged into three classes, according to the number of families and stipend of each; and the annual allowance granted by government to each minister was fixed according to this classification. A higher rate was granted to the ministers belonging to the synod of Ulster, the Remonstrant synod, the Presbytery of Antrim, and the Southern Association, than to those connected with the Secession. The rate fixed for the former was £50 per annum to the first class, £75 to the second class, and £100 to the third or highest class; while the ministers of the Secession, who were looked upon as of a lower grade, had allocated to them, according to their class, the sums respectively of £40, £50, and £70 per annum. Before any minister could receive the bounty, he was required to take the oath of allegiance, and an attestation to this effect, subscribed by two magistrates, must be transmitted to the proper quarter. If a minister was deposed, or deceased, the Regium Donum still continued to be drawn, in name of the congregation, but the benefit of it was appropriated to a widows' fund.†

This change in the mode of distributing the Royal Bounty, was obviously designed to give the government a check upon

\* The sum voted by Parliament to the Presbyterian Church in Ireland, for the present year (1838), amounts to £32,000.

† Political Christianity, p. 65.

the conduct of those who received it. Should any minister be accused or suspected of disloyalty to the reigning powers, it was easy for those who kept the strings of the government purse, to effect his removal, by merely withholding his annual allowance, seeing that, in many of the congregations, this allowance was almost all that the ministers had to depend upon for the support of themselves and families.\*

When the synod—belonging to the Anti-burgher portion of the Secession in Ireland—met at Belfast on the 4th of July, 1809, intimation was given them concerning the above mentioned change in the mode of distributing the Regium Donum; and the question, Whether the bounty could be accepted on the terms proposed? became the subject of discussion. It was the unanimous opinion of those who spoke, that it could not be accepted on such terms.† The motives which influenced the synod, in coming to this decision, were wholly of a religious nature, and respected their spiritual independence as a church of Christ. It is proper, however, to remark, that the Irish synod did not object to receive the bounty, on the ground of its being paid out of the public treasury. When it was paid to the synod in one sum, and equally distributed among the ministers, they had thankfully received it, regarding it as a free gift, and as a proof of the fostering care of government.‡ But they now objected to it, on the ground of the obnoxious conditions with which it was clogged. That no minister should be entitled to receive the bounty, unless he should previously qualify himself for it, by taking the oath of allegiance at his ordination, they considered as a purchasing of their loyalty; and the classification system was regarded with a suspicious eye, as tending to introduce a distinction amongst the ministers, inconsistent with presbyterian parity, besides being unjust in itself, as, according to this system, the smallest sums were given to the poorest class, and the largest sums to the wealthiest.

A petition from the presbytery of Belfast was presented to the General Associate synod in Scotland, at their meeting in April, 1810, requesting them to give their opinion and advice on this subject. This petition was brought up in consequence of certain proceedings which had taken place in the case of

\* Since the above was written, I have noticed a paragraph quoted from the *Dublin Evening Post*, in which it is stated, that government have published some new regulations respecting the distribution of the parliamentary grant to the Irish Presbyterian clergy. The classification above mentioned is now abolished. Every presbyterian clergyman is to receive £75 a-year; but no endowment will in future be granted or continued without the punctual payment of the congregational stipend.

† Letter in the *Christian Magazine* for 1809, p. 447.

‡ *Ibid.* p. 448.

Mr. Carmichael, minister at Ahoghill. His stipend amounted to about £40 a-year. His family were in a state of great destitution. He was required by his congregation to decline the Regium Donum. He expressed his willingness to do so, if his congregation would add to his stipend only half the amount of the bounty. With this request they refused to comply; and because, in these circumstances, he accepted of the Royal Gift, their indignation was excited against him. It was in connexion with such a representation as this, that the synod were called upon to give their opinion and advice. Their opinion was in favour of the Regium Donum being accepted in such circumstances; and this opinion was officially communicated to the synod in Ireland. The advice was unfavourably received by several of the congregations on the Irish side of the channel, and the agitation of the question produced a considerable ferment among the people.

At the next meeting of the General synod, in April, 1811, this subject again came under their review. Mr. Bryce, one of the ministers connected with the synod in Ireland, had protested against a decision of that synod, agreeing to act upon the advice given by the General synod, in the preceding year; and he now brought his protest and appeal before the supreme court. Memorials and representations, stating objections against the Secession ministers in Ireland accepting of the Regium Donum, were presented from the congregations of Belfast, Ahoghill, Lylehill, Killiag, and Knocklochrim. In the case of the Belfast congregation, the people appeared to be very equally divided in their sentiments on this question; for while the memorial against the Regium Donum was subscribed by eighty-eight persons, a protest against the transmitting of this memorial to the synod, was subscribed by eighty-six. The representation from the congregation of Ahoghill was subscribed by six elders and sixty-seven members; and the one from the congregation of Lylehill was subscribed by three elders and fifty members. But from both of these congregations counter-memorials were presented, accusing the majority of making unreasonable demands upon their ministers. In a paper, subscribed by six elders and seven members of the committee of the congregation of Ahoghill, it was stated, that a proposal had been made to their minister to relinquish the Regium Donum, and that he had expressed his willingness to do so, on condition that the congregation would augment his stipend from £40 to £60; but that the congregation refused to make this augmentation. A paper, subscribed by three elders and six members of the committee of the congregation of Lylehill, made a similar statement respecting their minister. Though he had not received

more than £36 or £37 annually, upon an average, from his congregation, yet he was willing, for the sake of peace, to renounce all claim to the *Regium Donum*, if a small increase were made to his stipend, so as to allow him a moderate competency; but this reasonable proposal the majority had thought fit to reject.

Complaints were, at the same time, presented against Mr. Bryce, for exciting animosities in the congregations, on the subject of the *Regium Donum*, and for being guilty of conduct subversive of the discipline of the presbyterian church, by going into the bounds of the neighbouring congregations, assembling the people, preaching to them, baptizing their children, and bestowing upon his brethren the most opprobrious titles, such as "hirelings," "pensioners," "wolves in sheep's clothing," &c.; making use of the divine prophecies to warrant him in these abusive representations, and pursuing this unbrotherly course of conduct in defiance of the authority of the synod of Ireland, who had warned him, that, if he persisted in these disorderly practices, they would inflict censure upon him in due form.

A petition was also presented from a number of persons, who had been connected with the Burgher congregation of Cole-rain and Randlestown, stating that they had withdrawn from their former connexion, in consequence of their ministers accepting of the *Regium Donum*, on the terms proposed by government; and they wished a supply of sermon to be sent to them by the General synod. All these memorials and petitions were referred by the synod to a committee, who were appointed to take the whole subject into consideration, and to report at a subsequent sederunt.

The following report was presented by the committee, and, after undergoing revision, was unanimously adopted by the synod:—"That though the synod do not consider the acceptance of the *Regium Donum*, in all circumstances, as unlawful, yet they cannot approve of receiving it on the term specified in the late grant. But as every thing which may be objectionable ought not forthwith to be made a term of communion; so the synod judge that, in present circumstances, the acceptance or non-acceptance of the *Donum* ought not to be viewed in this light; and they cannot help expressing their disapprobation of the conduct of those who have on this account withdrawn from the dispensation of divine ordinances in their respective congregations, and enjoin such persons to return to their duty, and exercise forbearance with their ministers and brethren in this matter; and in doing so, no session shall exclude them from church privileges for past irregularities in this affair. As, however, the acceptance of the *Donum* has

proved a stumbling-block to many church members, the synod judge, in order to remove it, that no presbytery in Ireland ought in future to grant a moderation, without being satisfied that the sum offered by the congregation is adequate to the support of a gospel ministry, according to their respective situations, independent of any such aid: And they recommend it to the several congregations already settled, to take immediate steps for the purpose of increasing the stipends of their ministers, that they may, as soon as possible, have no farther occasion for the assistance of government; and, when the respective presbyteries shall be satisfied with the support given, that they shall be bound to relinquish all interest in the Regium Donum."

In reference to Mr. Bryce, against whom the above-mentioned complaints were preferred, the synod required of him an acknowledgment of the irregularity of his conduct, and an expression of sorrow for it; they required of him, further, that he should refrain from all such practices for the future, and acquiesce in the decision now given respecting the Regium Donum. But he refused either to make the acknowledgment, or to promise the subjection, that was required; and the synod, on account of his obstinacy, suspended him from the exercise of the ministerial office till their next meeting.

If the support given by the congregations in Ireland to their ministers was scanty, the stipends given by the majority of congregations in Scotland were found also to be very inadequate. Some ministers had found it necessary to resign their charges on this account, and others continued to labour under distressing anxieties and privations. The discussions which had taken place concerning the Irish Regium Donum, had drawn the attention of the synod to this subject; and, at their meeting in August, 1811, they renewed an injunction formerly given to presbyteries, to report annually to the synod the manner in which congregations performed this necessary duty of giving adequate support to their ministers. The insufficiency of pecuniary exertion, on the part of the people, was attributed by the synod to inconsideration, rather than to unwillingness or inability; and ministers were required to remind them, prudently but honestly, of the obligations under which they lay, from Scripture, equity, and voluntary engagement, to exert themselves for the due maintenance of gospel ordinances. It was further agreed, that a committee of synod should be annually appointed to attend to this business. Vacant congregations, also, were required to make a small addition to the allowance usually given to preachers. The sum appointed to be given, each Sabbath, by the poorer congregations, was sixteen shillings; and those congregations that were in ordi-

nary circumstances, were enjoined to give not less than a guinea. It will not be affirmed, that either of these sums was too large to defray the travelling expenses, and other contingencies, of such a useful class of individuals as the Secession preachers.

At this meeting the synod approved of a proposal that was submitted to them, to open a correspondence with other religious denominations, holding evangelical sentiments in Scotland, England, and Ireland. A committee was appointed to prepare a circular letter for this purpose. At a subsequent meeting, the Rev. Alexander Allan read the draft of an overture, which he had prepared on this subject. But the synod delayed the consideration of it; and it does not appear that any farther steps were taken in this matter, until the union betwixt the two large bodies of the Secession was accomplished.

In the following year (May 1812), another important measure was adopted, having for its object the obtaining of correct information concerning the state of religion in the congregations connected with their association in Ireland and America. A committee of correspondence was appointed to obtain the necessary information. A similar measure was adopted in reference to the congregations in this country. The clerks of presbyteries were required to send up to the convener of the committee, now appointed, an account of the state of religion in the congregations of their respective districts. In this account they were required to state, amongst other things, the number of communicants connected with each congregation, the average attendance of public worship during the Sabbath, and also the number and state of praying societies in the several congregations.

Such measures as these were calculated to have a happy effect in uniting the different parts of the association more closely together, in stimulating the slothful, in encouraging the weak, and in promoting the interests of religion throughout the whole. It is to be regretted that churches professing the same faith, have not taken a deeper interest in one another's temporal and spiritual prosperity; that they have acted more upon the selfish than upon the social principle; that, instead of regarding themselves as parts of the same whole, they have looked upon themselves rather as isolated societies, and have, in consequence, been too often unmindful of the excellent apostolical precept, which enjoins every man to look "not on his own things, but also on the things of others." Every measure which has a tendency to destroy this selfish principle, to foster a spirit of brotherly-kindness, and to bring the different parts of the body of Christ more closely into connexion with one another, is deserving of commendation; and, when such

attempts are made, those who have at heart the peace and prosperity of Zion, instead of frowning upon them, ought to give them their cordial support.

A long course of ecclesiastical proceedings, which had been carried on against Mr. Robert Imrie, minister at Kinkell, for heresy, was brought to a close at this period. These proceedings, it is possible, may be regarded by some as unimportant in themselves, but as they excited a good deal of attention at the time, in that portion of the Secession Church whose history I am now recording, and as they tend to illustrate the extreme sensitiveness with which the Secession judicatories have ever regarded the slightest approach to error, on the part of any of their ministers, I have deemed it proper to give an outline of them in this record.

So far back as 1801, a member of Mr. Imrie's congregation preferred a variety of charges against him, before the presbytery of Perth, relating partly to the style of his preaching, and partly to the doctrines which he taught. The investigation of these charges showed that Mr. Imrie was accustomed, in his public ministrations, to employ modes of expression that were novel and unguarded, and calculated to unsettle the minds of his hearers with regard to some of the fundamental articles of the Christian faith. Though he was censured for making use of such expressions, yet the explanations which he gave of his views, in reference to the articles charged against him, were regarded as so far satisfactory, that he was permitted to continue in the exercise of his ministry.

In 1806, fresh charges were preferred against him; and the presbytery of Perth having proceeded to examine witnesses on oath, in reference to these charges, without having previously furnished Mr. Imrie with a libel, he appealed to the General synod against the irregularity of this procedure. Though his protest and appeal were dismissed, as not having been taken at the proper stage of the business, yet the presbytery were enjoined to take a precognition of witnesses, in order to ascertain if there were sufficient grounds for a libel; and should they find that this was the case, they were to put a libel into Mr. Imrie's hand, and proceed according to the rules of the church. A precognition of witnesses being taken, it was found that there were sufficient grounds for a libel, and one was accordingly put into his hand. In this libel Mr. Imrie was charged with having publicly taught the following doctrines:—1. That there was no proper condition in the covenant of works; and that Adam would have fulfilled no condition though he had stood. 2. That there was no proper covenant between the Father and the Son from eternity about man's salvation; for how could God make a bargain with

himself? and the Scriptures nowhere make mention of a proper covenant between these divine persons. (He would defy any one to find the word *covenant* used in Scripture, except where it refers to something else.) 3. That there was no proper condition in that covenant to be performed by Christ, as the surety of the elect; that it had been better for the church if the term condition had never been heard of; that the righteousness of Christ is not the condition of the covenant (that the righteousness of Christ and faith are equally not the condition of the covenant of grace), and that if there was any condition at all, it was the promises. 4. That Christ merited nothing for his people, by his obedience and death; that, as Mediator, he had nothing to give to God as an equivalent for the blessings conferred on his people, except what he had received from God; and that all the price he gave to God was a right improvement of the qualifications which God gave him. 5. That although Christ was Mediator in the eternal purpose of God, yet he was not actual Mediator until his incarnation in the fulness of time, and he never mediated actually until he assumed a human nature; that Christ, as Mediator, has no grace to give to the church, he is only a servant, and what has a servant to give, but what he receives from his master? 6. That the promises of God received by faith, and not the work of Christ, is the ground of the sinner's justification; that Christ's righteousness is not imputed to believers, except in its fruits and effects; that it was not Christ's work, in coming into the world, to save sinners, but to do the will of God, and let God see to the salvation of sinners: (That some make a distinction concerning Christ's sufferings, as partly satisfactory and partly exemplary; but he affirmed that none of them were satisfactory, only the exercise of Christ's mind under them was satisfactory; and that the satisfaction of Christ was a human satisfaction.) 7. That Christ was not the only Redeemer of God's elect, but God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. 8. That the Spirit dwells not in believers, but works on the mind by the Word as a mean; that he only dwells in them by his gifts and graces through the influence of the Word: that in his first dealings with sinners, they are active in the use of means, and that persons in an adult state must always be first in the use of means, or else they cannot be saved. 9. That the sins of believers expose them to divine wrath. 10. That the possession by devils, so often narrated in the gospel, is not to be viewed as a real and proper possession, but merely as figurative of certain diseases with which these persons were afflicted: that though the devil might act upon such persons in the way of suggestion, through the medium of external means, yet he can never be

said to enter into men, so as to possess their bodies and speak out of them.

Such were the charges of heresy advanced against Mr. Imrie ; and the presbytery, after examining a variety of witnesses in support of them, referred the determination of the whole matter to the supreme court, which met at Edinburgh on the 28th of April, 1807. The synod, after having read, *seriatim*, the depositions of the witnesses, and hearing Mr. Imrie's explanations, gave judgment on each of these articles in detail. With regard to the first article contained in the libel, the synod found that Mr. Imrie had taught, that there was no proper condition in the covenant of works. On the second article, it was found, that the general enunciation contained in it was not proved ; but it was proved, that he had said, How could God make a bargain with himself ? also, that the Scriptures nowhere make mention of a proper covenant between these divine persons, as the term covenant is commonly understood amongst men ; and they nowhere make mention of a proper covenant, except when it refers to something else. In reference to the third article, it was proved, that Mr. Imrie had taught, that it had been better for the church if the term condition had never been heard of, at least unless it had been more accurately defined ; also, that if there was any condition, it is the promises. On the fourth article, it was found, that Mr. Imrie had taught, that Christ, as Mediator, had nothing to give to God, as an equivalent for the blessings conferred on the church, except what he had received from God ; that all the price which Christ gave to God was a right improvement of the qualifications that God had given him. The statements contained in the fifth article were fully established. The sixth article was found not fully proved ; but the synod reserved to themselves the liberty of conversing with Mr. Imrie on the subject. The charge contained in the seventh article was proved, viz. that Mr. Imrie had taught, that Christ is not the only Redeemer of God's elect. The eighth and ninth articles were found not proved ; but in reference to them, the synod reserved the same liberty as with regard to the sixth. On the subject of the tenth article, the synod found that Mr. Imrie had taught error.

After these findings, an opportunity was given to Mr. Imrie to explain more fully his views, by questions being proposed to him on each of the points at issue ; and the result of these interrogations was slightly to modify the finding of the synod on the first article. Being asked, Why he denied that there was a proper condition in the covenant of works ? he answered, Because that the observance of the positive prescription or law, given to Adam, was the ground on which God promised life

to him and his posterity, and not any thing independent of God, in lieu of, or in exchange for, that life. From this answer the synod found from the idea which he affixed to the word *proper*, that he did not deny that there was a condition in the covenant of works; but that he was culpable for introducing into his pulpit discourses abstract distinctions on this subject, which were apt to perplex and unsettle the minds of his hearers. The answers which he gave to the questions, proposed to him on the other points, did not lead to any satisfactory result.

On the ground of what had been proved in the course of this investigation, one portion of the synod were for deposing Mr. Imrie *instantly* from the office of the holy ministry, and a motion was made to that effect; another portion were inclined to be more indulgent, and proposed that, in the meantime, he should be rebuked and suspended from the exercise of his ministry, with certification, that if he did not give satisfaction to the synod at their next meeting, they would then proceed to inflict a higher censure. The vote being stated, "Depose?" or, "Rebuke and Suspend?" it carried by a large majority, that he be rebuked and suspended with certification. Six ministers and one elder craved to have it marked, that they had voted, "Depose." Mr. Richard Black entered his protest against certain parts of the findings of the synod, as being more lenient than the proof warranted.

This business was again resumed by the synod, at their meeting in April, 1808. Mr. Imrie was subjected to the ordeal of another examination. He admitted, in reference to the objectionable points with which he was charged, that he had used language that was improper and calculated to mislead, especially on the subject of the covenant of works, and the covenant of grace; and also with regard to the Mediatorial work of Christ. On this last point he substantially retracted the statements which he had formerly made. He had affirmed that Christ was not actual Mediator till his incarnation in the fulness of time, and that he never mediated actually until he assumed a human nature. Being now asked, if he admitted that Christ really exercised the office of Mediator under the Old Testament in the performance of mediatory acts; he admitted that he did. It was then asked, "Does Mr. Imrie admit, that Christ was actually Mediator under the Old Testament?" To which he replied, "That Christ was Mediator actual under the Old economy, in performing mediatory acts, so far as competent to him in the divine nature." He then admitted, that he had employed, on this subject, language that was improper and unguarded; and that he had made use of a distinction and refinement that were calculated to

perplex and distract the minds of his hearers. On the subject of demoniacal possessions, he admitted that these possessions were real, and that it was highly improper in him to make use of expressions, on this subject, that were fitted to produce a belief of the opposite doctrine.

At the close of his examination by the synod, he dictated to the clerk the following acknowledgment:—" I am unfeignedly sorry, that by the introduction of certain expressions and distinctions, I have given cause of offence to the church, and I am resolved in the strength of grace to avoid all such in future, and I acquiesce in the judgment of synod with respect to doctrine on the several articles, as stated in the minutes of synod." As there existed amongst the members of synod a considerable diversity of sentiment with regard to Mr. Imrie's conduct, it was agreed to delay, till a subsequent meeting, coming to a final decision on this matter.

When the synod met in April, 1809, Mr. Imrie showed a disposition to equivocate; to explain away some of the explanations which he had formerly given. After a variety of questions had been proposed to him, and answers returned, some of which were not regarded as satisfactory, the following motion was made;—" That the synod, considering this cause in its extensive character and consequences, and especially considering that the synod have found Mr. Imrie chargeable with error in some instances; and in other articles, as having used several expressions which have a tendency to mislead gospel hearers, and to undermine some of the most important doctrines of religion; and the synod not having received satisfaction for Mr. Imrie's offensive conduct, he be presently deposed from the office of the holy ministry."

Another motion was made, " That Mr. Imrie be continued under the sentence of suspension till next meeting of synod;" and the vote being taken on these two motions, it carried by a majority that Mr. Imrie be continued under the sentence of suspension till next meeting. Against this decision Messrs. Alexander Pringle, Richard Black, Samuel Gilfillan, Andrew Thomson, and George Paxton, entered their dissent.

At next meeting of synod (April 1810), this troublesome business again occupied their attention during several sittings. An opportunity was given to Mr. Imrie, by means of interrogations proposed, to explain his views on the subject of Christ's mediatorship, on demoniacal possessions, and on some other points with regard to which the synod had not formerly been satisfied. The explanations were so far satisfactory, that a motion was made, and carried by a majority of seven, to restore Mr. Imrie to the exercise of his ministry. Twenty-one ministers and four elders protested against this decision.

When the synod met in the month of April, the following year, a paper containing reasons of protest against the deed of their former meeting, restoring Mr. Imrie to the exercise of his ministry, was read; and after some deliberation, the synod agreed to review the obnoxious sentence. A long discussion ensued, which terminated in the following motion being adopted: "The synod, considering that Mr. Imrie, after being judicially found chargeable with error, was restored to the exercise of his office in the holy ministry, without any judgment of the court acquitting him of the charges under which he stood, or expressing their judicial satisfaction with the explanations he had given; without any explanations on his part, that he had retracted the errors found against him; without any profession of sorrow for the part he had acted, and without any pledge as to his future ministrations, they now proceed to consider what influence these and other facts should have on the sentence." After farther deliberation, the vote was then stated, "Reverse the sentence restoring Mr. Imrie to the exercise of the office of the holy ministry, or Not?" when it carried by a large majority, "Reverse." From this deed nine ministers and one elder dissented.

During the interval which elapsed betwixt the former meeting of synod and the present, Mr. Imrie had been indulging his favourite propensity of making paradoxical statements from the pulpit. A committee had been appointed by the presbytery of Perth to investigate the subject; and the result of the precognition was, that a paper containing a variety of additional charges, on the ground of erroneous doctrine, was laid upon the synod's table at their present meeting. This paper was referred to a committee, who were appointed to examine it, and to report how far it furnished foundation for a libel. The committee extracted from it no fewer than fourteen articles, containing dangerous errors and expressions. These articles the presbytery of Perth were required to embody in a libel, with which Mr. Imrie was to be served in due form; and written answers were to be given by him to the different charges. The whole process, after being completed, was to be brought again before the synod for a final decision.

In these articles, Mr. Imrie was charged with affirming:—

1. That to say there are three persons in the Godhead, is a dangerous expression: such as say so are right if they mean three modes of subsistence; such as say, only one, are right if they mean only one agent or will.
2. That there were no distinct personal actings of the distinct persons of the Godhead in the making of the covenant of grace, on account of the unity of the divine will; and that to maintain distinct personal actings in the making of the covenant, or in the application of

redemption, is equivalent to the assertion of three Gods. 3. That there was no eternal covenant between the Father and the Son, with reference to the salvation of lost sinners ; but that it was made with Christ in time, as man, because he then had a will distinct from the divine ; that the Son made the covenant with the man Christ, as much as the Father and the Holy Ghost ; and there could be no covenant between the Father and the Son, on account of the unity of the divine will. 4. That the Father and the Son being equal in glory and dignity, and one in will, it is impossible that the Son could become the Father's servant. 5. That God could have brought all mankind to heaven, if he pleased, without a sacrifice. 6. That Christ is not the head of the church, but a member of her, the first man in her, or head in the church. 7. That Christ was not a priest from eternity ; that Melchisedec was a type of Christ, and the type must exist before the antitype. 8. That Christ was not Mediator, in fact, till the period of his incarnation, and his human nature itself was the Mediator. 9. That the human nature of Christ received no assistance from God, when going through the work of our salvation ; and that Christ, in his sufferings, was supported by his own grace, and not by any special assistance from Omnipotence. 10. That reconciliation is not the reconciliation of God to sinners, but of sinners to God ; that the term *reconcile* signifies to change, or alter, which could not be applied to God ; and that it is unscriptural language to speak of God as being reconciled. 11. That we did not need a divine righteousness, but the righteousness of Christ as man ; and it is only his human righteousness that is imputed to us. 12. That the sin of the first Adam, and the righteousness of Christ, are imputed to persons only in their effects. 13. That Christ is only relatively God, but not really God. 14. That there are no degrees in mystery, and that the work of redemption is no more above reason than the work of creation ; and that if we devote ourselves to the study of it, we may understand or comprehend it as much as farming or any other business.

After a long and tedious investigation of these charges, carried on during two successive meetings of synod, it was found, in reference to the fifth, tenth, eleventh, twelfth, thirteenth, and fourteenth articles, that no error had been proved against Mr. Imrie, or confessed by him. With regard to all the other articles, it was found that he had used unguarded and unwarrantable language, and had taught doctrines at variance with the standards of the church. The whole business was terminated by a sentence of deposition being pronounced upon him. The sentence, and the grounds upon which it

was pronounced, were embodied in the following motion, prepared by a committee, and which the synod, after some discussion, adopted by a large majority :—

“ Whereas the synod, at their meeting in April, 1809, found that Mr. Imrie was chargeable with error, on the articles of Christ's mediation and demoniacal possessions, and that he had used various expressions, particularly this,—‘ How can God make a bargain with himself?’ which tended to mislead his hearers, and undermine the important doctrine of an eternal covenant between the Father and the Son, as distinct parties : And whereas, notwithstanding Mr. Imrie's professions of sorrow, submission to censure, and solemn promise of acting a different part, it was found, that after his restoration to office in April, 1810, he had, by his doctrine and modes of expressing himself in the pulpit, given occasion for a new process, in conducting which the synod found, at their last meeting (August, 1811), That upon articles second and third, and seventh and ninth, of the libel, the doctrine advanced by Mr. Imrie, with respect to the eternity of the covenant of grace and mediation of Christ, is inconsistent with the doctrine of the scriptures and of the standards of the church ; and that, on article first, he had used improper and incautious modes of expression on the doctrine of the Trinity : And, at the present meeting, on article fourth, he is blameable for saying, ‘ That as the actings of the divine will in the Son cannot be ministerial and subordinate to those of the same will in the Father, therefore it behoved the Son to become man, that he might be a servant ; and that as one divine person cannot, in himself, even with his own consent, occupy a subordinate place or station to another, and cannot condescend to act in a subordinate character ; so the Son not only did not, but could not, become the servant of the Father, for any particular purpose respecting the salvation of sinners, but by becoming man ; and that their essential equality rendered any subordinate station, even by voluntary consent, impossible ;’—both of which declarations must, at first view, in the ordinary use of language, be considered as a denial of his acting in a subordinate character as the Father's servant, till invested with human nature ; On article sixth, that he is blameable for seeming to represent the actual headship of our Lord as dependent on his actual incarnation, by teaching, ‘ That Christ is the head of the church, as in her and a part of her, her chief and principal member or part ;’ and saying, ‘ Our text does not view him as merely the Son, in which respect he has no God or head, but as God in our nature, as born in our nature, as born in the church, concerning whom it may with propriety be said, *This man was born there* ; and he is, by being so, the prime, the first

man in her, because God-man, the heir and head :’ On article eighth, that Mr. Imrie had taught, ‘ That Christ could not be a priest but in our nature ;’ and that he views Christ as ‘ being a priest merely in purpose or design from eternity, in promise and type under the Old Testament dispensation, and in fact only under the New ;’ and that he holds it as a principle, ‘ That the whole of the mediatory office is nearly comprehended in Christ’s priestly function, thereby excluding almost all that he did either as a prophet or a king, from the execution of his mediatory office.’ Upon these grounds, although the other articles of libel be not proven, the synod judge that Mr. Imrie ought to be deprived of the ministerial office, and do therefore depose him from the office of the holy ministry, and suspend him from the fellowship of the church.”

In conformity with this sentence, Mr. Imrie was solemnly deposed from the office of the ministry. After the sentence was pronounced upon him by the moderator, and suitable exhortations addressed to him, he stated, that he declined the authority of the synod ; that he considered the sentence as informal and injurious, and therefore null and void ; and he protested against it, declaring that his connexion with the congregation of Kinkell was, notwithstanding it, valid, and that it should be no prejudice to his exercising his ministry there, or elsewhere, according to the openings of providence. Six ministers and two elders craved to have their dissent from this sentence of deposition marked in the synod’s record.

Mr. Imrie was considered by many to be an able and a faithful minister of the gospel, and the sentence pronounced upon him was regarded by his friends as unreasonably severe. He had an acute and a powerful mind, and seems to have been fond of making nice distinctions in theology. Taking the most favourable view of his case that it will admit of, his language, to say the least of it, was unguarded, and was apparently much better calculated to perplex than to instruct. Some of his positions were sufficiently startling, and if they did not amount to positive heresy, they made a close approximation to it. He had acquired, in a high degree, the attachment of his people. They refused to acquiesce in the sentence of the synod, dissolving the pastoral relation betwixt him and them. They left, nearly in a body, the communion of the synod ; and having erected a new place of worship in the village of Auchterarder, they continued to enjoy his ministrations till the close of his life.

While these proceedings, which have now been detailed, were in progress, the synod kept steadily in view the extension of the Secession Church in Nova Scotia, and in the United States of America. Frequent applications were made to them

by the churches on the other side of the Atlantic, to send out more labourers : and scarcely a meeting of synod occurred, at which an attempt was not made to procure young men, who should be willing to undertake a transatlantic mission. Several disappointments were experienced, in consequence of individuals, to whom application was made, refusing to accept of a missionary appointment; but notwithstanding these disappointments, a respectable addition was made, in the course of a few years, to the synod in America, and to the presbytery of Nova Scotia, by means of preachers sent from this country. Mr. Joseph Shaw was ordained at Philadelphia in November, 1806, and Mr. Gordon was settled in Prince Edward's Island, in the month of October, the year following. In May, 1809, Mr. William Brownlee was ordained at Mount Pleasant, Bridgetown, and Mr. Robert Bruce at Pittsburgh and Peter's Creek. These were followed in succession, across the Atlantic, by Mr. John M'Kinlay, Mr. John Liddell, Mr. Peter Bullions, Mr. Alexander Gordon, Mr. John Donaldson, Mr. John France, Mr. Andrew Isaac, and Mr. Duncan Campbell. The greater part, if not the whole, of the expense connected with these missions, was defrayed by congregational collections made in this country.

The synod once and again reminded the churches in Nova Scotia, and in the United States, that it was their duty to contribute for the purpose of defraying the expense of these missions. These churches were now growing in wealth, and rising in importance, and they were able to bear at least a certain portion of expense. The intimation thus given was not without effect. At one of their meetings, held during the year 1808, the Associate Presbytery of Pictou resolved to establish a fund for the advancement of religion. A considerable sum was collected by the congregations in connexion with the presbytery, and the sum of £90 was remitted to the mission fund of the synod. At a subsequent period, when an application was made from the presbytery of the Carolinas for additional preachers to be sent out, it was stated, that they had provided funds for defraying the expense of the mission. A similar application being made, about the same time, from the synod in America, they mentioned that they had appropriated the sum of five hundred dollars to defray the charges of the preachers who might be sent.

The brethren in Nova Scotia, having no hope of procuring an adequate supply of preachers from the mother country, began to entertain, in 1810, the idea of training ministers for themselves. One of them, writing to a friend on the subject, says,—“ We have begun as low as possible. Mr. Ross has at present a young lad, begun to learn Latin, with a view to

the ministry. We think we could raise finances for carrying on four students at a time, if their parents would help moderately. But we hardly expect to find students for some time ; the thing is new here. Our plan is to appoint one of ourselves to teach them the languages, and, in place of lectures in philosophy, to collect a small library of books in history, and the most useful sciences ; make them read these, and help them by frequent examination, and directions, to get as good a view of them as we can ; and perhaps a few lectures on divinity. To accustom them to compose, we mean to give them subjects of discourse, from time to time, beginning at an early period, and continuing all along.”\*

At a meeting of the Associate synod of Philadelphia, held at Cononsburgh, in May, 1811, the important question was discussed, Whether the *not holding* of slaves ought to be made a term of communion ? Some insisted that this was a matter which belonged to the state. But after a long discussion, the following propositions were carried by a majority :—

I. That it is a moral evil to hold negroes or their children in perpetual slavery, or to claim the right of buying and selling, or of bequeathing them as transferable property.

II. That all persons belonging to our communion, having slaves in their possession, be directed to set them at liberty, unless prohibited from doing so by the civil law ; but that, in those states where the liberation of slaves is rendered impracticable by the existing laws, it is the duty of masters to treat them with as much justice as if they were liberated ; to give them suitable food and clothing ; to have them taught to read, and instructed in the principles of religion ; and, when their service may justly deserve it, to give them additional compensation.

III. That slave-holders who refuse to renounce the above claim, and to treat their slaves in the manner now specified, are unworthy of being admitted into, or retained in, the fellowship of the church of Christ.

IV. That it may be lawful for persons in our communion to purchase negroes from those who are holding them in perpetual slavery, with a view to retain them in their service until they are recompensed for the money laid out in the purchase of said slaves, provided it be done with the consent of the negroes themselves, treating them in the mean time according to the second regulation.

V. That it is the special duty of sessions to see that the above regulations be faithfully acted upon ; but before they can be acted upon by any session, care shall be taken, in

\* Christian Magazine, New Series, vol. v. p. 113.

every congregation where the application of them is requisite, not only to have the people apprized, but instructed, in the moral evil of the slave-holding here contemplated.\*

The congregations in Nova Scotia, in connexion with the General Associate synod of this country, now began to adopt measures with a view to effect a union with the other presbyterian congregations in that province. After some time spent in making the preliminary arrangements, this desirable object was accomplished in the spring of 1818. The three presbyterian denominations, consisting of ministers from the Church of Scotland, and from the two leading branches of the Secession, constituted themselves into a synod, under the designation of "The Presbyterian Church of Nova Scotia." The United Church was divided at first into three presbyteries; and some time afterward, a fourth was added. Intelligence of this event was communicated to the General synod, at their meeting in May 1818; and, after having duly considered the grounds on which the union had been effected, they agreed in making a declaration, that, though they had "some serious difficulties" with respect to certain articles in the Formula submitted to their consideration, yet they were sufficiently aware that no church in a newly settled country can be expected to be brought all at once to a high degree of perfection; and they found nothing in the constitution of the presbyterian church of Nova Scotia which prohibited them from co-operating with these brethren "in the great work of propagating the principles of religion, and advancing the cause of Christ."

Soon after the process against Mr. Imrie was terminated, an overture was introduced into the synod, which occupied their attention at successive meetings. This overture had for its object the simplifying of the process of covenanting, by declaring the reading of the national covenants on these occasions to be unnecessary, and by altering the form as well as abridging the length of the Acknowledgment of Sins, which document was considered by some to be too prolix, and to resemble too closely a liturgy or form of prayer. Before the discussions on this subject were brought to a close, the synod ceased to exist as a separate association, being called upon to unite with their brethren of the Associate synod. During the progress of these discussions, a new edition of the Testimony was required; and it was unanimously agreed to omit, in this edition, an obnoxious paragraph in the eighteenth chapter of the Testimony. In this paragraph it was declared, that the synod were of the same opinion with the Associate Presbytery, "That the Solemn League and Covenant was, *for the matter*

\* Christian Magazine, New Series, vol. v. p. 408.

*just and warrantable, for the ends necessary and commendable, and for the time seasonable;* and, therefore, in acknowledging the obligation of the covenants of their ancestors, they made no exception as to any part of their matter;" the objection to this declaration was, that it seemed to imply an approbation of the civil as well as the religious part of the Solemn League and Covenant, which they considered it incompetent for them, as an ecclesiastical court, to give. By omitting the objectionable paragraph, they swept away the last shred of anything in their public documents, which seemed to imply an approbation of civil pains and penalties in matters of religion.

Among the last acts of the General Associate synod, previous to their uniting with their brethren, was the appointment of some of their number to itinerate in the Highlands of Argyleshire and Perthshire. They also gave a favourable reception to an application made to them from the Irish Evangelical Society, to send some of their preachers to itinerate in Ireland, under the direction of that society. They further recommended, that a collection be made in their several congregations, in aid of the funds of that institution. By such useful and honourable acts as these, did they show that the spirit of Christian zeal and liberality which prompted them, at an early period of their history, to send preachers of the gospel to foreign lands, continued to animate them till the close of their career, as a distinct religious association.

I have now reviewed the proceedings of the General Associate synod, from its commencement till the year 1819, when its table was loaded with petitions from its numerous congregations, soliciting measures to be adopted with a view to a union with their brethren of the Associate Synod, from whom they had now been separated for a period of more than seventy years. As the measures which were adopted with a view to the accomplishing of this memorable union, were common to both synods, I shall reserve the detail of them, till I give an account of the proceedings of the Associate Synod, when the two streams of the Secession History shall again unite into one, and shall be seen rolling onward in a broad and deep channel from the period of the union in 1820, till the present time.

## HISTORY OF THE ASSOCIATE (OR BURGHER) SYNOD.

### CHAPTER XV.

First meeting of Burgher Synod—Committee appointed to prepare an explication of the Shorter Catechism—Petition from societies for sermon—Answers delayed—Fast appointed on account of the breach—Mr. E. Erskine receives temporary charge of the Students—Proposal to enlarge the Psalmody—Ministers sent to preach in Ireland—Mr. Fisher chosen Professor of Divinity—Publication of Fisher's Catechism—Privy censures appointed—Formula of questions proposed on these occasions to elders—Formula of questions proposed to ministers—Case of casuistry—Episcopacy condemned—Remarks—Mr. Matthew of Midholm joins the Synod—Presbytery of Down formed in Ireland—Troubles of the Irish brethren—Encouragement given to the brethren by the synod—Death of Mr. Ralph Erskine—His character—His loss lamented by the Synod—Act concerning scope and design of the Testimony—Cases of insubordination on the part of preachers—Case of Mr. Wylie—Case of Mr. Forrest—Last illness of Mr. Ebenezer Erskine—His death—And character—Mourned by the Synod—Mr. Thomas Clark missioned to America—Prevented from going—Douglas, a tragedy, written by Mr. Home—Represented on the Edinburgh stage—Theatre attended by several ministers of the National Church—Discipline inflicted on them—Mr. Carlyle proves refractory—Libelled—And censured—General Assembly caution ministers against attending the theatre—Associate Synod testify against encouragement given to the theatre by ministers—Formula of questions proposed to presbyteries at privy censure—Proceedings of Synod concerning covenanting.

AFTER the separation, occasioned by the burgher-oath controversy, the Associate Burgher Synod held its first meeting at Stirling on the 16th of June, 1747. Mr. James Mair, minister at West Linton, who had been elected moderator before the separation took place, opened the meeting by preaching a sermon from Isaiah viii. 17: "And I will wait upon the Lord that hideth his face from the house of Jacob, and I will look for him." The following ministers and elders were present on this occasion:—Of the presbytery of Dunfermline; Messrs. Ralph Erskine, Dunfermline; and James Johnstone, Dundee, ministers; with John Wardlaw from Dunfermline, ruling elder: Of the presbytery of Glasgow, Messrs. Ebenezer Erskine, Stirling; James Fisher, Glasgow; David Horn, Cambusnethan; Henry Erskine, Falkirk; John M'Cara, Kilbarchan; Andrew Black, Cumbernauld; Andrew Thomson,\* Mearns; David Telfar, Bridge of Teith, ministers;

\* Mr. Thomson soon after this withdrew from the synod, and connected himself with his brethren of the Associate Antiburgher synod.

with Robert Paterson from Stirling; Andrew Glen from Glasgow; Robert Kedder from Cambusnethan; John Anderson from Falkirk; and John Fisher from Bridge of Teith, ruling elders: Of the presbytery of Edinburgh, Messrs. James Mair, West Linton; William Hutton, Stow; John Smith, Jedburgh, ministers; with Messrs. John Mowbray from Edinburgh; Archibald Hall from West Linton; and William Manderston from Haddington, ruling elders. Mr. Thomas Somerville, minister at Newcastle, though not present at this meeting, continued to adhere to the synod.

Mr. James Fisher was chosen moderator; and Mr. Daniel Cock, clerk of the Glasgow presbytery, was unanimously appointed to act as clerk to the synod, though he was not a member of court.\*

At this and some of the subsequent meetings, the attention of the synod was much occupied with matters originating in the unhappy division that had taken place: to these a reference has been made in a preceding part of the narrative. They renewed an appointment, formerly given, to the different presbyteries to prepare an explication of the Assembly's Shorter Catechism. The chief burden of this work devolved upon Messrs. Ebenezer and Ralph Erskine, and Mr. Fisher. Several applications were laid upon their table from societies in different parts of the country, requesting advice "in their present circumstances," and a supply of sermon. The synod delayed giving an immediate answer to these applications; and, in the meantime, as they had few preachers on their list, they appointed Messrs. Thomas Clark, Thomas Main, and James Wright, students of divinity, to be entered on trials for licence by the presbytery of Glasgow.

One of the petitions, presented to the synod at this meeting, called forth from them a strong expression of satisfaction. This was a petition from the associate congregation of Carrick and Galloway, earnestly beseeching the synod, "in the bowels of our Lord Jesus Christ, to sue after peace with their protesting brethren, and in order to obtain this, to propose meetings with them for prayer and conversation, and other expedient means for obtaining peace in a way of truth." In answer to this petition, the synod promised "to use all proper means for procuring peace, upon the footing of truth, among the Lord's ministers and people whom he had divided in his just displeasure."

The synod being left destitute of a Theological Professor, in consequence of Mr. Alexander Moncrieff having adhered


\* Mr. Cock was afterwards ordained at Greenock, and finally went to America.

to the other portion of the Secession, this subject was taken into consideration at a meeting, held at Dunfermline, in the beginning of September this same year. It was recommended to Mr. Fisher that he should turn his attention to the subject, with a view to his being appointed to fill the Theological chair; and, in the meantime, the students of divinity were placed under the charge of Mr. Ebenezer Erskine at Stirling. At this meeting, the synod appointed a day of fasting to be observed in all their congregations, on account of the late "melancholy and awful rupture that had fallen out in adorable providence among the ministers and people of the association." They met again in the following month (October) at Glasgow, when a petition was presented from some individuals in London, craving that the synod would take them under their superintendence, and send them a supply of sermon; and requesting, in an especial manner, that Mr. John Potts might be sent to labour amongst them for a season. Mr. Ralph Erskine was appointed to write to the people in London, informing them that their petition for sermon would be taken into consideration at a future meeting; and as Mr. Potts had received a call from the congregation of Dalkeith, they enjoined the presbytery of Edinburgh to take the ordinary steps, with a view to his immediate settlement in that place.

At a meeting of the synod held at Stirling on the 12th of April, 1748, it was resolved, that, according to the practice of the Church of Scotland in her purest times, both presbyterial and synodical privy-censures should be commenced. It was recommended to the several presbyteries, to suggest such questions as might be suitable to be put on these occasions; and they were further enjoined to send up the records of their proceedings, from the first formation of the synod, that they might undergo examination. The synod, being desirous to enlarge the psalmody, requested Mr. Ralph Erskine to undertake a translation into metre of the Songs in Scripture, with the exception of the Psalms of David. A committee, formerly appointed to prepare a formula of questions to be put to students at receiving licence, and to probationers at their ordination, was renewed, and they were required to present a draught of questions at an early meeting of synod. A proposal was made that a committee be appointed, "to inquire into some historical mistakes which are alleged to be in the Act and Testimony, and other papers published by the Associate Presbytery; and to show the true meaning of some other parts of the said Testimony and papers, which are misrepresented and perverted at this day." This proposal was adopted; and Messrs. Ralph Erskine, James Fisher, and Henry Erskine were appointed a committee for the purposes specified. At a subsequent meet-

ing, this committee was enlarged by the addition to it of Messrs. Ebenezer Erskine, James Fisher, William Hutton, David Horn, John M'Cara, and James Main; and the task was devolved upon Messrs. Ebenezer and Ralph Erskine to prepare what was called a *materia substrata* for the committee to work upon. Before separating, the synod agreed that a day of fasting and humiliation should be again observed by the people under their charge. In the reasons assigned by them, for calling upon their people to engage in this exercise, they gave a particular prominence to the unhappy division that had taken place in the Secession, as indicative of the divine displeasure. The Act of synod, authorizing the fast, commences with a solemn reference to the "awful judgments, especially of a spiritual nature, which the Lord hath been, and is, inflicting upon us; and whereby he hath given manifold tokens of his righteous wrath and displeasure against the whole land in general, and particularly against a remnant of ministers and people, who have been professing to bear witness for him, in a way of Secession; and, especially, in that he hath, at this day, so greatly divided this remnant in his anger, and covered them with a very thick cloud; and is still continuing in so great a measure to pour forth his fury, in this respect, like fire; and to burn against Jacob like a flaming fire which devoureth round about."

This same year, the synod, in answer to applications formerly made to them, agreed to grant a supply of sermon to societies, who were associated for this purpose in different parts of the country. They also sent some of their number to preach in Ireland. At this period there were three congregations in that country, that received from them a regular supply of sermon; these were Killenny, Ballerunny, and Ballibea. Mr. John Swanston, a young man of considerable promise, and who was afterwards chosen Professor of Divinity by the synod, received a call from each of the two congregations first mentioned; but a call being given him at the same time by the congregation of Kinross in Scotland, the synod appointed him to be ordained at Kinross. Messrs. David Telfar of Bridge of Teith, John Smith of Jedburgh, and Andrew Black of Cumbernauld, were appointed to labour in succession, each for several weeks, among the Irish congregations. In the following year, Mr. Telfar received a call from the congregation of Ballibea; but when the matter came before the supreme court for decision, they thought proper to continue him in his charge at Bridge of Teith. A call given at the same time to Mr. Black, by the congregation of Killenny, was more successful, for the synod sanctioned his removal from Cumbernauld.



While the synod were thus actively engaged in re-organizing those congregations which had been shattered by the breach that had taken place, and in forming new ones where they had not previously existed, they showed a laudable anxiety for the improvement of the young men who were training up for the ministry. At their meeting in October, 1748, they appointed all the students in philosophy and divinity to be examined once every year, by their respective presbyteries, that they might mark the progress which they were making in their studies. They also recommended to the congregations under their charge, to renew their annual collections for supporting the students, and for other public purposes.

Mr. Ebenezer Erskine having intimated that he felt himself unable any longer to continue, through the infirmities of age, his prelections to the students of divinity, Mr. James Fisher was unanimously elected Theological Professor, on the 7th September, 1749, and the students were required to assemble at Glasgow on the 1st of February, the following year. A reference has already been made to the appointment of a committee by the synod, to prepare an exposition, in the form of question and answer, of the Assembly's Shorter Catechism. This work was executed by Mr. E. Erskine, as far as that question in the catechism, "How doth Christ execute the office of a priest?" when he stated to the synod, at their meeting in May, 1750, that he was obliged to desist from a work of such difficulty and fatigue, owing to increasing infirmity, and the heavy load of labour imposed upon him by the superintendence of an extensive congregation. The synod requested him to complete that portion of the work which he had commenced, by giving the exposition of the question, "How doth Christ execute the office of a king?" And the remaining part of the Catechism was divided among the three presbyteries. The brethren connected with the presbytery of Dunfermline were required to prepare an exposition from the question now mentioned to the third commandment inclusive. That portion extending from the third commandment to the question, "What is repentance unto life?" was assigned to the brethren of the presbytery of Glasgow; and the remaining portion was allotted to the presbytery of Edinburgh.

Though the pens of several ministers were employed in this useful work, yet Messrs. Ebenezer and Ralph Erskine, and Mr. Fisher, were intrusted with the revisal and correcting of the whole; so that, when completed, it might have a uniformity of style and method. With the exception of Mr. Fisher, none of these excellent individuals lived to see this work completed. It was published successively in two parts. The first part was published in the beginning of 1753, and contains an

exposition of that portion of the Catechism, which states the doctrines we are required to believe concerning God, and terminates with the question, "What benefits do believers receive from Christ at the resurrection?" Mr. Ralph Erskine died a short while before this part issued from the press, and his brother Ebenezer died soon after the publication of it. The second part of the work, containing the exposition of those questions which teach the duty that God requires of man, was not published till seven years after the first. After the death of the two Erskines (Ebenezer and Ralph), the synod, by a renewed recommendation, intrusted the preparation of the second part to Mr. Fisher. Though he was furnished with materials by several of his brethren, yet the chief burden of the work lay upon himself. In the preface prefixed to the second part, Mr. Fisher informs us, that this portion was neither read nor judicially sanctioned (as the first had been) by the synod; but was published by him, on his own responsibility; and he modestly observes concerning it,—“Any imperfections or weaknesses that may be found therein, are not to be imputed to the body of ministers, with whom I am, in providence, connected; but to myself only.” I have been thus particular in noticing the origin and progress of this excellent exposition of the Shorter Catechism, because the synod, in originating such a work, rendered essential service not only to their own church, but to the religious world. I know not if there be in the English language a more useful publication, for conveying, in a simple form, to the minds both of young and old, clear and Scriptural views of the whole system of revealed truth.\*

The synod having enjoined both sessions and presbyteries to observe privy-censures, it was necessary to have a form of questions suitable for being proposed to elders and ministers on these occasions. The following were the questions which the synod appointed to be put to elders, when the session was convened for the exercise of privy-censure:—

1. Have you the worship of God in your family, in all the parts of it, morning and evening, every day?

2. Do you study to have a grave, sober, pious, and exemplary walk and conversation in your family, and before the world, as it becometh your office and station?

3. Do you not reprove all vice, and discourage all appearance of evil in your family, and do what in you lies to cause every one in your house to fear the Lord?

4. Do you endeavour to be exemplary in the religious observance of the Lord's day, in the public, private, and secret exercises of God's worship; and do you examine your family,

\* This work is usually known by the name of "Fisher's Catechism."

in the Sabbath evenings, upon what they have heard in public, and upon the principles of our religion, contained in our catechisms?

5. Do you visit the sick in your bounds, and pray over them, especially when called thereunto?

6. Do you inquire into the moral character and behaviour of those of the congregation that are within your bounds, if they attend upon ordinances, have the worship of God in their families, and be of a blameless walk?

7. When you are informed of any scandal, are you at pains to make diligent inquiry into the truth of the report, in a private way; and when you find out the truth, do you speak to the offending party, or parties, by themselves, before you delate them to the session?

8. When offences are entirely private, and not known but to a few, do you use your endeavours to have them removed, to the satisfaction of these few, before you bring them to a more public hearing, after your private endeavours have had no success?

9. Do you make conscience of attending meetings of session, for the exercise of discipline and distributions to the poor, and likewise for prayer and Christian conference?

10. Do you inquire into the state of the poor within your bounds, and apply for their relief, as you know their necessity requires?

11. Do you take care to inquire for testimonials from those who come to reside within your bounds from other places?

12. Do you endeavour, as in the sight of God, without regard either to the pleasing or displeasing of men, to be conscientious and impartial in the exercise of discipline, and in giving your judgment and vote upon any matter of doctrine, or case of conscience, which may be handled either in the session, presbytery, or synod, whereof you may be a member?

13. Do you make conscience of, and are you impartial in, the distribution of tokens for admission to the Lord's table: do you give tokens to any but such as you know to be of a conversation becoming the gospel; and do you admit any but such as are known to be so?

14. Do you carefully avoid divulging what passes among the members of session, when giving their minds in matters that come before them, which are not fit to be published, and particularly when cognoscing upon the moral characters of such as are to be admitted to the Lord's table?

The synod appointed the following form of interrogation to be observed with regard to ministers, when they were assembled for the purpose of privy-censure. The questions will be admitted to be sufficiently pointed and minute:—

1. Do you worship God in your family, by singing his praises, reading a part of his word, and praying morning and evening : And do you the same in any family where you happen in providence to be lodged, as there is access ?

2. Do you catechise and instruct your family in the principles of religion, commonly once a-week ?

3. Do you use your endeavour to cause every one of your family to pray in secret, morning and evening, to remember the Lord's day to keep it holy, and to have a conversation becoming the gospel ?

4. Do you study, through grace, by an holy and circumspect walk, to be an example to the flock, over which the Holy Ghost hath made you an overseer, and to encourage grave and savoury discourse, to the use of edifying, in all companies where you are in providence ?

5. Have you a session, and has every one of your elders certain bounds assigned to them in the congregation, that so they may more easily visit the sick, and inspect the morals of the people ?

6. Do you, in connexion with your session, study to exercise discipline impartially, without respect of persons ; and, with respect to private offences, do you observe the rule (Matthew xviii. 15), to tell offending parties their fault privately, before they be brought to the session ?

7. Do you not pretend to usurp a negative over your brethren in the session, but do you labour to moderate therein with calmness and meekness, as it becomes a servant of Christ, who is not to lord it over any part of God's heritage ?

8. Have you a session register, and do you take care that the minutes of session be revised by a committee thereof, and recorded in the said register ; and have you a register of the collections and distributions for the poor, and of the time of baptisms and marriages within your congregation ?

9. Do you, and the other members of your session, meet for prayer and Christian conference, at least once a-month ; and do the members of session undergo privy-censure, at least once a-year, according to the laudable practice of this church ?

10. Do you keep uniformity with your brethren in the public worship of God, lecturing and preaching commonly on the forenoon of the Lord's day, and preaching in the afternoon, together with prayer and praise, according to the custom and directory of this church, agreeably to the word of God ?

11. Do you keep any sermon in your congregation, commonly on some work day, beside the Sabbath ? \*

\* This question was intended only for the ministers of town charges.

12. Do you preach catechetical doctrine, as recommended by the assemblies of this church ?

13. Do you study to preach the gospel plainly to the capacity of your people, and to apply your doctrine to their consciences, and to establish them in the present truth, in opposition to the errors of the times ?

14. Do you endeavour to give seasonable and faithful warning and testimony against the sins and scandals that take place in your congregation, and against the public corruptions and defections of the times, without lessening or extenuating those evils, to your knowledge, either for pleasing men, or from fear of their displeasure ?

15. Do you study, through grace, when you preach the gospel to others, to apply it to, and to have the sense and impression of it upon, your own soul ?

16. In preaching upon the duties of the law, do you take care to discover to your people their utter inability and unwillingness to perform any acceptable duty, without a principle of spiritual life and union with the Lord Jesus, as the only spring of all true holiness ?

17. In preaching the doctrines of grace, do you not show to your people that the said doctrine does by no means encourage any to turn the grace of God into lasciviousness, but on the contrary, to deny all ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world ?

18. Do you give yourself to reading, and do you endeavour, in the use of prayer and meditation, deliberately to study the Lord's mind in his word, before you deliver it to the people, when you have time and opportunity to do so, and not to deliver unpremeditated and unstudied discourses, except upon an unforeseen and particular call in Providence ?

19. Are you frequently at a throne of grace, seeking of the Lord, not only the gift of prayer and preaching, but the grace of them, that you may be successful in winning souls to Christ, and that you may finish your course with joy, and the ministry which you have received of the Lord ?

20. Do you visit your congregation in a ministerial way, by exhortation and prayer from house to house, once every year, or as often as your circumstances will permit ?\*

21. Do you visit the sick in your congregation, especially when called thereto, and do you pray over them ?

22. Do you examine the people of your congregation at public diets (without respect of persons), upon the principles

\* The alternative allowed in this question was intended to apply to those congregations in the country that were widely scattered throughout several parishes.

of religion contained in our Confession of Faith, and Catechisms, once every year?

23. Do you administer the sacrament of baptism in an orderly way, after sermon, on the Lord's day, or upon a week day, when public intimation is made of sermon or catechising, the Sabbath before, when you have not a stated week day's sermon; and do you avoid private baptism, according to the laudable acts and constitution of this church?

24. Do you administer the sacrament of the Lord's Supper in your congregation, at least once every year?

25. Are you and the session careful to keep back the ignorant and scandalous from that holy ordinance?

26. Are you concerned to know, as far as you can, the spiritual state and condition of your flock, by their knowledge and practice, so as that hereby you may be enabled to apply yourself more closely to their soul's case, both in public and private?

27. Have your session the Bible and Confession of Faith ready at hand, when they constitute, as also a copy of the Acts of Assembly, from 1638 to 1650, and since that time; and do you regulate your proceedings in discipline agreeably to these Acts, in as far as they were passed for advancing and carrying on a covenanted reformation, agreeably to the word of God, and the received principles and constitutions of the Church of Scotland?

The above questions show us what were the duties which the Secession Church required of its office-bearers at that period. They show us also how anxious the synod were that both ministers and elders should be faithful in the performance of these duties. Though there are some things adverted to in these questions, not at all suited to the circumstances of the Secession Church in the present day, yet, viewed as a whole, they furnish an excellent directory for guiding ministers and elders in the performance of those duties incumbent on them as office-bearers of the Christian church.

A case of discipline came under the consideration of the Associate synod, in October 1750, which deserves to be recorded, as showing what were the sentiments entertained, at that period, concerning episcopacy, by the ministers and people of the Secession, in common with their brethren in the Established Church of Scotland. A mason, of the name of Andrew Hunter, who was a member of the Associate congregation in Glasgow, had undertaken, and had commenced building, an Episcopal Chapel in that city. His conduct gave great offence to the members of the congregation with which he was connected, as well as to some other of the inhabitants of the town, who had heard that a person professing to be a Se-

ceder was engaged in such an undertaking. Andrew was dealt with privately, by his minister (Mr. Fisher), and several members of session, to renounce the work, and yielded at first so far to their arguments and solicitations, that he promised to use his endeavour to get himself disengaged from it; but he was either unable or unwilling to fulfil his promise, for he still persevered in the work, and he was cited to appear before the session. The first and second summons was disregarded; but a third citation being given, he appeared and declared that he had withdrawn from the congregation, and no longer owed subjection to the judicatories of the Secession Church. The session made use of a variety of arguments, in order to bring him to a better state of mind; but to no purpose. Andrew declared that his resolution was immoveably fixed to proceed with the work. He was asked if he "would lie open to light" in the matter; to which he replied he would not, and that it was needless for the session to give themselves any farther trouble.

The case was deemed to be of such importance, that it was referred to the presbytery; and, as the culprit did not choose to obey the summons given him to appear at the bar of the presbytery, the whole matter came before the supreme court for its decision. After mature deliberation, the synod recorded the following deliverance on this subject:—

"The synod, considering that the building of an Episcopal meeting-house for the worship and ceremonies of the Church of England, was at least equal to the building of the high places mentioned in the Old Testament, where, though sacrifices were pretended to be offered to the true God, yet they were offered on other altars than the altar of the Lord in his temple, quite contrary to his institution, prohibiting sacrifices to be offered any where else; therefore does the Spirit of God record a censure upon some of the kings of Judah, that though they had other commendable qualities, yet nevertheless the high places were not taken away; and considering that, by the second commandment, we are required to receive, observe, keep pure and entire such religious worship and ordinances as God hath appointed in his word, and are forbidden to worship God by images, or any other way not appointed in his word; and that the ceremonies of the Church of England are superstitious devices and innovations upon the worship of God, forbidden in that commandment, and that God is most jealous, and takes strict notice of any innovation upon his worship (1 Kings xii. 32, 33), and threatens to punish all such, in a most severe manner, who innovate upon his worship, or set up their own inventions in the room thereof, or are assistant to those that do so (Isaiah lxxv. 11, 12); and, in case it should

be alleged, that workmen who receive hire from others are not to be blamed in the pursuit of their calling, but those who employ them; therefore the Spirit of God records a censure even upon workmen who take such employment in hand, as to contribute their skill in accommodating those who are for setting up a false worship (Isaiah xlv. 10, 11); And further, considering that, by the National Covenant of Scotland, and by the Solemn League and Covenant of the three kingdoms, we are bound to reform from popery, prelacy, superstition, and whatever is contrary to sound doctrine and the power of godliness, and to endeavour the preservation of the reformed religion of the Church of Scotland, in doctrine, worship, discipline, and government; and that Seceders, in a particular manner, profess to own these solemn obligations; and that the said Andrew Hunter, by his above practice, is so far from endeavouring reformation from prelacy and superstition, that he is encouraging the same, contrary to his profession and solemn ties; therefore, for all the above reasons, the synod were unanimously of the judgment, that the said Andrew Hunter was highly censurable, and particularly that he ought not to be admitted to any of the seals of the covenant, till he profess his sorrow for the offence and scandal that he has given, and been guilty of. And the synod are of opinion that, though this censure is not so explicit and formal as the nature of his offence and contumacy would deserve, yet, that a public intimation hereof, in the Associate congregation of Glasgow, by way of a testimony against the above practice, may at present answer the ends of edification in the circumstantiate case, especially at such a juncture as this, when the discipline of the house of God is rendered contemptible by the extravagant heights into which the separatists have run; and, farther, the synod advise that the Associate presbytery of Glasgow make inquiry into the success of this intimation, with respect to the foresaid Andrew Hunter, and that they may proceed to farther censure, or not, as they shall see cause."

Should any be inclined to smile at the above decision, as a specimen of testimony-bearing, carried to an unreasonable length, such ought to remember that popery and prelacy were regarded (whether justly or not I shall not take upon me to determine), as twin sisters, not only by the Seceders, but by the great bulk of presbyterians at that period: and those persons who gave any countenance either to the one or to the other, whether directly or indirectly, were considered as violating their covenant obligations, and as acting inconsistently with their profession as Christians. But times and opinions are now changed. Episcopacy, especially if it appear in the form of an establishment, nowhere meets with such eloquent and zeal-

ous defenders, as it does among the leading Scottish presbyterians who live in our day. It is pronounced by those who boast themselves the descendants of the intrepid covenanters, to be one of the main supports of the Christian faith ; and to attempt a reformation in any part of its time-worn fabric, is regarded as a species of sacrilege fitted to draw down the wrath of heaven upon those who shall be guilty of such daring conduct.

At the same meeting of synod which determined Andrew Hunter's case, a request was presented in the name of Mr. Patrick Matthew, minister at Midholm, that he might be permitted to make a statement to the court. Permission being granted, Mr. Matthew read a paper, in which he expressed his contrition for the part which he had acted at, and since the period of, the rupture in the Associate synod. He craved forgiveness, and begged leave to re-occupy his seat in the synod, promising all due subjection in the Lord. Mr. Matthew having read his paper, laid it upon the table, and retired. After some deliberation, the synod agreed that Mr. Matthew be rebuked by the moderator, "for the several pieces of his offensive deportment mentioned in said paper, and that he be admonished to steadfastness in the Lord's cause and way for the future ;" and thereafter, that he be permitted to take his seat as a member of court. Mr. Matthew being called in, expressed his willingness to submit. He was accordingly rebuked and admonished by the moderator, and took his seat among the brethren.

The exertions of the synod, in sending the gospel to Ireland, were attended with a considerable degree of success. In the summer of 1751, they were enabled to form a presbytery in that country. It was designated the "Associate Presbytery of Down," and consisted, at its first formation, of three ministers with their elders.\* An application was made, this same year, to the synod, from a number of persons residing in Philadelphia, in the province of Pennsylvania, North America, who were very desirous that a preacher should be sent to them. But however willing the synod were to comply with the request of their American brethren, they found themselves unable, as yet, to undertake a mission across the Atlantic, on account of the scarcity of preachers, and the urgent demands made for their labours at home. This application from America was renewed in the following year (April 1752), and was accompanied with a promise that all expenses connected with the mission would be cheerfully defrayed. The synod delayed

\* The three ministers connected with this presbytery were Messrs. Andrew Black, Killenny ; Thomas Clark, Ballibea ; and Thomas Main, Ballerunny.

giving an answer till a subsequent meeting. Petitions were laid upon their table, at the same time, from societies in London, and from the presbytery in Ireland, representing "their melancholy condition through want of the gospel, and ordinances thereof, dispensed by any with whom they had freedom to join," and craving that a supply of preachers might be sent as speedily as possible. Mr. James Erskine, who a short while before this had been ordained colleague to his uncle Ebenezer in Stirling, was sent on a mission for two months to London, and a promise was given to the Irish presbytery that one or two young men would be sent to them as soon as they were licensed.

When the synod met in October (1752), their attention was called to the troubles in which the congregations in Ireland were involved, in consequence of both ministers and people being required by the underlings of government to swear oaths which were considered insnaring, and to swear them in a form of which their consciences disapproved. The objectionable form was, according to technical phraseology, *Tactis et deosculatis evangeliis*.<sup>\*</sup> Those who refused to take the oaths in the manner required, were threatened with imprisonment. The synod took up the case of the Irish brethren with great promptitude; and they agreed that if any of them should be imprisoned for conscience' sake, they would contribute to the utmost of their power for their support during the whole period of their imprisonment. Two years afterward, these brethren renewed their application for the interference of the synod in this matter. A request was presented, that the synod would endeavour to procure, with all possible speed, credentials from some of the peers and principal town-councils in Scotland, to attest the loyalty of the Seceders in Ireland; that they would also grant them pecuniary assistance in defraying the expenses which had already been, or might still be, incurred in the prosecutions to which they were subjected for conscience' sake; and that they would further send one of their number to give them advice as to the course of procedure which they ought to pursue in their present circumstances. The synod lent a favourable ear to this appeal. They appointed Mr. John M'Cara, minister at Burntshields, to proceed to Ireland, and to take along with him credentials of the attachment of the Irish brethren to the civil government of the country. As he expected to obtain money in Ireland, they authorized him to apply to the relief of these brethren such a sum as might be necessary in the present

<sup>\*</sup> By touching and kissing the gospels.

juncture of affairs ; and whatever sum might be expended by him for this purpose, the synod agreed should be paid to him on his return. He was specially enjoined to examine into the state of matters among the Seceders in Ireland, and to report to the synod the result of his investigations. In addition to this proof which they gave of their sympathy with their brethren in the sister kingdom, they resolved that they would make every effort to obtain for them a speedy deliverance from the difficulties in which they were involved.

In the midst of these transactions, the Secession Church sustained a severe loss in the unexpected removal of Mr. Ralph Erskine from this earthly scene. He expired at Dunfermline, after a short illness, on the 6th of November, 1752, in the sixty-eighth year of his age. This eminent minister has left behind him, in his writings, both in prose and poetry, a lasting monument of his talents and his piety. It has been seen, in a preceding part of this narrative, that he connected himself with the Associate Presbytery at an early period of its existence. In all the labours and struggles of the Secession, during its infancy, he bore a prominent share ; and, by his exertions, both in the pulpit and from the press, he contributed, in no small degree, to promote its success. His writings have been highly esteemed by the pious, both in our own, and in other lands. The most honourable testimonies have been borne to their excellence and their usefulness by persons of all religious denominations. So long as the English language shall exist, so long shall his discourses be perused with interest and with profit by those who have a relish for the doctrines of the gospel. He was distinguished for the highly evangelical strain of his preaching. To magnify the grace of God, in the salvation of sinners, was the grand object at which he aimed in his pulpit ministrations. He lived and died under the influence of the doctrines which he taught. During the long period of his ministry (extending to about forty years), he took an active interest in those great questions connected with ecclesiastical polity, and the maintenance of sound doctrine, which agitated Scotland, both before and after the commencement of the Secession. His latter end was peace. Though he was prevented by the nature of his disease (a nervous fever), from saying much in his last illness, yet he gave sufficient evidence, by occasional expressions which he uttered, that he enjoyed, at his departing hour, the consolations of that gospel which he had so faithfully preached. Among the last words which he was heard to utter, were, " I will be for ever a debtor to free grace." And

he breathed out his immortal spirit exclaiming, "Victory, victory, victory."\*

His death was mourned by the Associate synod as a public loss. At their first meeting after this event had taken place (May 1753), they made special mention of it in their minutes, as a cause of humiliation; and having agreed, according to custom, to spend a part of a sederunt in prayer and praise, the brethren, who were appointed to conduct the devotional exercises of the synod, were enjoined to take particular notice in their prayers of "this awful providence of God."

A short while before his death, Mr. Erskine had completed his translation of the Scripture Songs into metre, according to the appointment of synod formerly noticed. The first draught of them, however, had been written in short hand, and it had been recommended to Mr. Erskine to get them transcribed into a legible hand. A committee was at the same time appointed to hear them read, and to report concerning them to the synod. But before the committee had time to fulfil their appointment, Mr. Erskine died, and the synod did not think proper to take any farther steps in the matter. The Scripture Songs were afterwards published as part of Mr. Erskine's works, but without receiving any official sanction from the synod.

In November, 1753, the synod, at a meeting held at Stirling, gave their sanction to a document of some length, which a committee had, for a considerable time, been engaged in preparing. This document, after being carefully revised, was ordered to be published under the title of an *Act of the Associate Synod, containing a narrative of the rise, progress, and grounds of their Secession: Together with a Declaration of the true scope and design thereof; as also of their Act, Declaration, and Testimony, &c.* The first part of the act contains an outline of those historical facts connected with the rise and progress of the Secession, which have been more fully detailed in this narrative; and the second part contains a declaration of the views which the Associate synod entertained concerning the various parts of the Narrative and Testimony, and other official documents of the Secession Church. The object of the publication of this act was twofold: First, to make the people well-acquainted with the grounds of the Secession; and, secondly, to vindicate themselves against misrepresentations, on the part of their opponents. They endeavoured to show, that a meaning had been affixed to some

\* Life and Diary of the Rev. Ralph Erskine, by the Rev. Donald Fraser, D.D. Kennoway, pp. 381, 382. The reader will find in this excellent memoir some interesting notices of the rise and progress of the Secession.

portions of these documents, which a fair interpretation of them did not warrant. The same committee, by whom this act had been framed, had also prepared, in connexion with it, an overture relative to the mistakes which were alleged to be in the Act and Testimony, but the synod delayed the consideration of this overture till a future meeting, and the following persons were appointed a committee to revise and correct it, viz. Messrs. James Fisher, William Hutton, John M'Cara, John Swanston, and John Brown, ministers; with James Reid, ruling elder.

Two cases of insubordination on the part of preachers, which occurred at this period, are deserving of notice, as tending to illustrate the high notions which the synod entertained of the respect due to their decisions as an ecclesiastical court. The first case was that of Mr. James Wylie, who received a call from the congregation of Donachlonny in Ireland. The presbytery of Down, within whose bounds this congregation was situated, put the call into Mr. Wylie's hands, and entered him on trials for ordination. Some time after this, another call was given him by the congregation of Kennoway in Scotland; and the synod were required, according to the practice of that period, to decide to which of these congregations he should be sent. At the above meeting, the synod, after some discussion, decided by a large majority, that the call from Kennoway should not be permitted to come into competition with that from Donachlonny; and the presbytery of Down were enjoined to ordain, with all convenient speed, Mr. Wylie, in the latter congregation. Mr. Wylie refused to submit. The presbytery held several meetings, at which they dealt with him to no purpose. The business was referred by the presbytery to the supreme court which met at Edinburgh, in April 1754. Mr. Wylie was required to state his reasons for refusing to comply with the decision of synod. After considerable time had been spent in reasoning upon this subject, Mr. Wylie was asked if his objections were removed, when he answered that they were not. A committee was then appointed to converse with him. The committee reported, that the reasons assigned by Mr. Wylie were not sufficient to justify his refusal to submit to ordination. His first reason was a scruple of conscience, which he had, about being ordained amongst a people, where there prevailed such an objectionable mode of administering oaths, which, as has already been noticed, was by touching and kissing the gospels. The committee replied, that this reason was not entitled to much consideration; for the synod had expressed their unanimous disapprobation of this mode of swearing; and there was ground to believe, that, as there seemed to be no express

law rendering this mode of taking an oath obligatory, the Irish Seceders would ere long, in the proper use of means, obtain deliverance from this grievance. Besides, the giving of a fixed gospel ministry to the people would be one of the best means of enlightening their minds, and thereby putting an end to this superstitious practice. His second reason was founded on the law which rendered it imperative on the Seceders in Ireland to pay tithes to the prelates. Mr. Wylie considered this a supporting of prelacy, and inconsistent with their "covenant obligations," and he could not conscientiously administer sealing ordinances to those who were chargeable with such a sin. To this the committee replied, that Mr. Wylie took altogether a mistaken view of the subject, that tithes are not the property of the proprietors of the land, far less of the tenants who possess them, that they were originally imposed by the legislature with the consent of the ancient proprietors, and the lands are both sold and let with this burden; and that, therefore, the payment of these tithes cannot properly be reckoned either a supporting of prelacy, or contrary to our covenants. Besides, they said, Mr. Wylie's reasoning would be equally valid, as an objection, against his settlement in any congregation in Scotland, inasmuch as the Scottish Seceders were liable, as well as others, to pay stipends to intruders, which, according to Mr. Wylie's reasoning, would be a supporting of these intruders, and contrary to their covenant obligations. His third reason was, that a portion of the congregation of Donachlonny were opposed to his settlement among them. To this it was replied, that if there were any of the people, who entertained prejudices against him, this was owing wholly to his endeavouring to alienate their affections from him, by refusing to accept of their call; but should he submit to ordination among them, this would have a happy effect in removing their prejudices and regaining their affections.

When the committee presented the above report, the synod declared that Mr. Wylie's reasons were fully answered, and that he was highly culpable in not fulfilling their former sentence; they further peremptorily enjoined him, *de novo*, to repair to Ireland without delay, and to submit to the presbytery of Down, with a view to his settlement in Donachlonny. Mr. Wylie being called in, and having this sentence intimated to him by the moderator, he declared, that he would on no account go to Ireland, or be settled in Donachlonny, be the consequences what they might. The synod, of course, felt their dignity insulted by this reply; and were unanimously of opinion that Mr. Wylie deserved to be censured for his contumacy, but delayed considering, till the ensuing

day, what censure ought to be inflicted ; and Mr. Wylie was summoned, *apud acta*, to appear before them next forenoon, at ten o'clock, to answer for his conduct.

On the following day, Mr. Wylie appeared at their bar with a subdued demeanour, and pled guilty to his offence. He said, that he was heartily sorry for his undutiful conduct toward them, in having expressed himself in such a manner as to give them just ground of displeasure, and was willing to submit to whatever censure they might think proper to inflict. At the same time, he represented, that he had been in a bad state of health while he was in Ireland, that he was not yet completely recovered, and he hoped that the synod would use tenderness toward him, and would not urge him to return immediately to that kingdom. The synod, though somewhat softened by his acknowledgment, proceeded to consider what censure should be inflicted on him ; and they at last agreed, that he should be admonished from the chair to conduct himself more cautiously and dutifully for the future, agreeably to the solemn obligations under which he came, when he received licence. This was accordingly done by the moderator. With regard to his request, to be allowed to remain in Scotland for the recovery of his health, the synod granted him an indulgence of four months ; and at the end of that period, he was to proceed immediately to Ireland, provided his health admitted, that he might be ordained in the congregation of Donachlonny.

When the four months of grace expired, Mr. Wylie still found it necessary for his health to remain in Scotland ; and at the next meeting of synod (November 1754) he was again obliged to appear before them to give an account of his non-fulfilment of their appointment. The plea which he urged was the state of his health. The synod sustained his excuse, but did not release him from his engagement to go to Ireland, until it was intimated to them by a letter from a member of the presbytery of Down, that the congregation of Donachlonny had withdrawn the call which they had given to Mr. Wylie, and that the presbytery had declared them at liberty to call another. On receiving this information, the synod declared their former decision no longer binding on Mr. Wylie.

The second case of insubordination, to which a reference has been made, and which occupied the attention of the synod at the same time with the proceedings which have now been detailed, was that of Mr. David Forrest, who had received a call from the congregation of Midholm, and another from the congregation of Stow. The competition was decided by the supreme court (October 1752), in favour of Stow, and Mr.

Forrest was appointed to be ordained in that congregation. One year elapsed, during the course of which the people of Stow waited patiently for Mr. Forrest's settlement amongst them. The Edinburgh presbytery, within whose bounds the congregation of Stow was situated, at length made a complaint to the synod, that Mr. Forrest refused to submit to ordination; and they summoned Mr. Forrest to appear before the supreme court. Mr. Forrest obeyed the summons, and stated in presence of the synod his objections to a settlement at Stow. The synod, after an ineffectual attempt to remove Mr. Forrest's difficulties, appointed a committee to converse with him. In the mean time a call from the congregation of Inverkeithing to Mr. Forrest was laid on the synod's table, which the synod, after some consideration, dismissed, on the ground that they had already appointed Mr. Forrest to be ordained in the congregation of Stow. The committee appointed to converse with Mr. Forrest reported, that, after some time spent in reasoning with him, they had been successful in removing his objections, and that he had expressed his willingness to submit to ordination. After receiving this report, the synod enjoined the presbytery of Edinburgh to proceed with all convenient speed in his settlement.

These proceedings took place in November, 1753. But when the synod met in April, the following year, the presbytery of Edinburgh again complained, that they had been unable to carry into effect the sentence of synod, for that Mr. Forrest refused to comply. The same process was again gone through as formerly. Mr. Forrest was heard in support of his objections. Discussion took place in the synod; and Mr. Forrest was again handed over to a committee, that they might deal with him. When the committee gave in their report, it was unfavourable. Mr. Forrest remained immovably fixed in his purpose not to be ordained at Stow. A long process of reasoning on the subject again took place in the synod, and Mr. Forrest was asked, If he was convinced by what he had heard? He replied, that he was not. Another committee was appointed to converse with him, who reported, "That notwithstanding all the reasoning and influence they could use, he remained the same as before." Mr. Forrest was again called before the synod, and interrogated, if he was willing to submit; to which he replied, that he could not do so at present; but requested that they would allow him some time to ponder upon the matter, with a view to get his scruples removed. The synod, wishing to show him all manner of indulgence, agreed that he should not be required to give a definite answer till their next meeting. Mr. John M'Cara was opposed to this decision, and craved,

that he might have the following statement, expressive of his views, inserted in the record:—"That he was of opinion, that the synod should proceed to consider, at this meeting, Mr. David Forrest's conduct, in regard he judged that Mr. Forrest had no reason of weight, why he did not submit to his ordination in Stow, according to the former appointment of synod; and that his reasoning against it proceeded entirely upon a circle, and imported that the clearness of a young man to accept or not accept of a call to a particular congregation, was a necessary ingredient in the call of God to that congregation; whereas our books of discipline hold forth the outward and ordinary calling to the ministry to have two parts only; the election of the people, and ordination, or the solemn separation of the person appointed, to God and his kirk, after he is tried and found qualified, by fasting, prayer, and imposition of the hands of the presbytery: So that according to the judgment of this national church, agreeably to the sacred oracles, a man ought, when regularly chosen and appointed to a particular flock, to take the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; and that, therefore, he, the said Mr. M'Cara, thought the synod ought not to trifle with Mr. Forrest or any young man in this matter, but to proceed with them according to the rule of the Lord's word, leaving events to him, whose promise will be forthcoming to them, in this and every other case, when they walk in his ways and keep his charge. Zechariah iii. 7."

At next meeting, a petition was presented from the congregation of Stow, expressing their continued attachment and adherence to Mr. Forrest, notwithstanding the reluctance he had shown to accept of their call; and requesting the synod to expedite his settlement amongst them. But Mr. Forrest's resolution remained unchanged. He was asked, If he had now obtained "clearness" to submit? He replied, that he had not. The business was again referred to a committee, who were charged with the difficult task of endeavouring to remove Mr. Forrest's objections. This committee reported, that they had conversed with Mr. Forrest, with a view to induce him to submit; and they proposed, as the result of their conference with him, that if Mr. Forrest would profess his sorrow for the trouble he had given the synod, in refusing, from time to time, to submit to their decision, under the mistaken notion, that a candidate's private inclination is essentially necessary to constitute a relation between him and a particular people, and not the determination of the judicature to which he is subject, and if he would further declare, that his fixed principle is, that in matters not morally evil, it is the duty of one subject to a judicature to submit to their

decision; then the synod might take into consideration, whether it would be for edification to proceed with the settlement of Mr. Forrest at Stow, seeing he had done so much to alienate the affections of the people from him.

The synod, after deliberating on this proposal of the committee, refused to adopt the latter part of it; but in reference to the former part of it, they agreed to put the following question to Mr. Forrest:—"Do you profess your sorrow for giving the synod so much trouble, by refusing from time to time to comply with their decision, and to submit to ordination in Stow, from the mistaken notion, that a candidate's private inclination is essentially necessary to constitute a relation between him and a particular people, and not the determination of the judicature: And is it your fixed principle, that in matters not morally evil, it is the duty of one subject to a judicature to submit to their decision?" To this Mr. Forrest replied in the affirmative; and the synod, having obtained from him this confession, agreed that he should be admonished by the moderator from the chair, on account of his conduct, the sinfulness of which he had now acknowledged.

After the admonition was tendered to him, the synod next considered what was to be done in consequence of Mr. Forrest refusing to submit to ordination at Stow. A long time was spent in reasoning on this point. After a considerable deal of discussion, the question was again put to Mr. Forrest, whether he had yet obtained "clearness" on the subject; to which he gave the same negative answer as formerly. The synod unanimously found him censurable for his obstinacy, and were about to consider what censure ought to be inflicted on him, when the commissioner from the congregation of Stow rose and begged leave to address the court. His statement was to the following effect:—"That seeing the synod had used all due means for bringing about the desired settlement with Mr. Forrest, and that he, notwithstanding thereof, still obstinately refused to comply, and for which the synod had actually found him censurable, and were about to consider what censure should be inflicted on him, he (the said commissioner) declared and protested in name of his constituents, that as all hopes of a settlement with Mr. Forrest, in an amicable way, were now lost, they therefore gave up all claim unto Mr. Forrest by virtue of their call to him and sentence of synod following thereupon; and that they should be free of whatever consequences might hereafter follow on his said refusal." He thereupon took instruments in the clerk's hands, and craved extracts.

In consequence of this declaration, made by the commissioner from Stow, the synod declared the call from that congregation to Mr. Forrest null and void; and that the people were

at liberty to apply for another moderation, and to call whomsoever they might think proper. They further agreed to the following overture, which was designed to serve the twofold purpose of expressing their disapprobation of Mr. Forrest's conduct, and of laying down the doctrine of the synod, to be acted upon, in all similar cases, in time to come:—"That since Mr. Forrest's sinful conduct, in refusing to comply with the sentence of synod, wherein it is impossible to prove any moral evil, still continued; and thereby the due obedience and subjection in the Lord which, according to his vows when licensed, he owed to this judicature, is still refused, which conduct of his obliged the people of Stow to make the above declaration, from the affection which they did bear to him: Therefore, though Mr. Forrest deserved to have his licence taken from him for his said conduct, the synod should notwithstanding, out of lenity to Mr. Forrest, acquiesce in rebuking him for the same, and admonishing him to beware of such a sinful step for the future: And, moreover, the synod agree, that if any candidate shall hereafter refuse to comply with the judgment of the judicature concurring with an harmonious call, the said judicature shall proceed to censure, in case the candidate cannot support his refusal by reasons founded on the word of God; and that, in the case of calls for the future, judicatures shall proceed upon the merits of the cause, without laying any stress upon the inclinations of the candidate, and that nothing done to the contrary hereof, now or formerly, shall be pled as a precedent in time to come." In conformity with this resolution, Mr. Forrest was rebuked by the moderator, for his contumacy, and this affair terminated.

At this period, the Secession Church was called upon to mourn the loss of another of its distinguished worthies. The health of Mr. Ebenezer Erskine had, for some time past, been in a declining state. His originally vigorous constitution had been gradually yielding to the increasing infirmities of age. For a short while before his death, he had become unfit to sustain the accumulated load of official duty, connected with the public situation which he occupied as a minister of the gospel. His affectionate people, in order to relieve him from the active duties of his office, invited his nephew, Mr. James Erskine, to take part with him in the work of the ministry; and this amiable youth was ordained to be the colleague and successor of his uncle, on the 22d of January, 1752. Only a short interval elapsed after the death of his brother Ralph, when Ebenezer was called upon to put off the earthly house of his tabernacle. When he heard of his brother's death, he exclaimed, "And is Ralph gone? He has twice got the start of me; he was first in Christ, and now he is first in

glory.”\* In a letter written to a friend soon after this event, he says, “According to the course of nature, it was my turn to have gone off before him. But the will of the good and sovereign God has determined otherwise, and that I should tarry behind for a while in this weary wilderness. It seems I am not yet made meet to be a partaker of the inheritance of the saints in light, but need to be more beaten in the wilderness with the hammer of affliction, before I come to the upper temple and sanctuary. But good is the will of the Lord.”†

Though he was at this time in a very debilitated state, through the severity of his trouble, yet at the earnest request of his people, who were desirous to see and hear him once more before his departure from them, he went from his bed to the pulpit, and preached for half-an-hour from these words, “I know that my Redeemer liveth;” he then returned from the pulpit to his bed. This discourse was one which had been composed by him with a view to the improvement of the death of his brother. “His last sermon (his biographer informs us) was literally preached from his bed to a company assembled in his room, where he baptized a child, after discoursing on a text with which he had particularly wished to finish his ministry, viz. Psalm xlviii. 14, ‘This God is our God for ever and ever; he will be our guide even unto death.’”

The following account of the holy exercise of this eminent minister in his last illness, and of the concluding scene of his life, extracted from Dr. Fraser’s interesting memoir, is deserving of a place in this record.

“His private conversation with relatives and other kind inquirers, during his last illness, was at once cheerful and edifying. He often expressed himself in language to this effect: ‘I have always found my times of severe affliction my best times. Many blasts I have endured through life; but I had this comfort under them, a good God, a good conscience, a good cause.’ When one of his elders thus accosted him, ‘Sir, you have given us many good advices, may I ask what you are now doing with your own soul?’ ‘I am just doing with it,’ he replied, ‘what I did forty years ago; I am resting on that word, “I am the Lord thy God.”’ Another friend, surprised at the serenity and cheerfulness he possessed in the immediate view of death and eternity, put the question, ‘Sir, are you not afraid of your sins?’ ‘Indeed no,’ was his answer, ‘ever since I knew Christ, I have never thought highly of my frames and duties, nor am I *slavishly* afraid of my sins.’

“To several friends who were conversing with him one

\* Fraser’s Life of E. Erskine, p. 454.

† Ibid. p. 457.

afternoon, he expressed his assurance of perfect bliss in the following memorable words:—‘O, Sirs, my body is now become a very disagreeable habitation for my soul; but when my soul goes out of my body, it will as naturally fly into the bosom of Jesus, as a stone will fall to the centre.’ Or, as others relate the anecdote, he said, what is entirely to the same effect, and what probably he also uttered, either then or about the same time; ‘I know that when my soul forsakes this tabernacle of clay, it will fly as naturally to my Saviour’s bosom, as the bird to its beloved nest.’ To a relative he one day said, ‘While age and infirmities are increasing, I desire to wait all the days of my appointed time till my change come, looking out for the everlasting day of the immediate enjoyment of the Lord, when sighing and sinning shall have an everlasting end.’ To another of his relations who came to see him, and began to comfort him thus, ‘I hope you get now and then a *blink* to bear up your spirit under your affliction,’ he promptly returned this spirited reply, ‘I know more of *words* than of *blinks*. Though he slay me, yet I will trust in him. The covenant is my charter; and if it had not been for that blessed word, my hope and strength had perished from the Lord.’ To his beloved children he unbosomed himself in the most endearing manner, mingling consolation with his dying counsels: ‘Though I die, the Lord liveth. I have known more of God since I came to this bed, than through all my life.’

“During the night on which he finished his earthly career, Mrs. Fisher having come from Glasgow to visit her dying father, was sitting in the apartment where he lay, and engaged in reading. Awakening from a slumber, he said, ‘What book is that, my dear, you are reading?’ ‘It is your sermon, father,’ she replied, ‘on that text, “I am the Lord thy God.”’ ‘O woman,’ said he then, ‘that is the best sermon ever I preached.’ The discourse had proved very refreshing to himself, as well as to many of his hearers. A few minutes after that expression had fallen from his lips, he requested his daughter to bring the table and candle near the bed; and having shut his eyes, and laid his hand under his cheek, he quietly breathed out his soul into the hands of his Redeemer, on the 2d of June, 1754. Had he lived twenty-four days longer he would have finished the seventy-fourth year of his age; and had he been spared three months more, he would have completed the fifty-first of his ministry, having resided twenty-eight years at Portmoak, and nearly twenty-three at Stirling.”\*

\* Life of Ebenezer Erskine, p. 458—460.

When the death of Mr. Erskine was announced to the synod, at their meeting in November, 1754, they were deeply affected by it. They felt that one of their wisest counsellors and brightest ornaments was gone. They considered it as a call given them to humble themselves before God. In recording the event in their minutes, they mentioned it as an "awful providence of God," and when they appointed some of their number to conduct the devotions of the synod, at the opening sederunt, they enjoined them to take special notice in their prayers of this event, as a cause of humiliation.

The name of Ebenezer Erskine deserves to occupy a distinguished place in the religious history of Scotland. To the noble stand which he made at a period of acknowledged degeneracy in the national church, are we to attribute, under God, the existence of the Secession. Aided by those venerable and single-hearted men, who placed themselves by his side in the day of his trial, and who shared with him in the censures inflicted by the ecclesiastical judicatories, he was the honoured instrument, in the hand of God, of forming and rearing up a church, by means of which the gospel was preserved in its purity, in our land, when it was in great danger of becoming extinct, and from which the gospel sounded forth to distant regions. It was owing to the firmness and intrepidity of this individual, seconded by the efforts of his excellent associates, that an asylum was erected in our country to which religious liberty fled, and where it found a secure retreat, when it was expelled from the Establishment. What could the people have done, with the yoke of patronage wreathed so firmly around their necks, if the Secession had not come to their rescue, at the time it did, and presented them with the invaluable boon of hearing the gospel preached by pastors of their own choosing? It must have been peculiarly gratifying to Mr. Erskine, to behold the wide extent over which the Secession had spread, and the amount of good which it had accomplished, before he closed his eyes in death. He must have regarded it as a pleasing token, that the sacrifices and struggles, which he had made in his Master's service, had not been made in vain. While Mr. Erskine, by his wisdom and talents, was peculiarly fitted for promoting the success of the cause in which he was embarked, he was eminently distinguished as a preacher of the gospel. The dignity of his manner, his commanding appearance, his ready eloquence, and the truly evangelical strain of his doctrine, rendered him a great favourite in the pulpit with all classes. He enjoyed, during the course of a long ministry, a degree of popularity which has fallen to the lot of few. A minister of the gospel who had frequently heard him preach (the Rev. William

Hutton of Dalkeith) speaking of his public ministrations, said: "I never saw so much of the majesty of God in any mortal man as in Ebenezer Erskine." And the Rev. Adam Gib of Edinburgh pronounced upon him a similar eulogy. Having asked at a brother in the ministry, if he had ever heard Mr. Erskine preach, and being answered in the negative, he said, "Well then, Sir, you never heard the gospel in its majesty."\*

There is no greater honour which can be conferred on an individual, in the present life, than to be employed as an instrument in stemming the progress of error, and in maintaining the cause of truth in the midst of abounding corruptions. Such an honour was conferred upon Ebenezer Erskine, in common with the other founders of the Secession. Though, while living, he received a large share of obloquy for the exertions which he made in defence of popular rights, yet posterity will do justice to his memory, and in the ages to come, his name will be associated with the names of those worthies, who, at different periods, have laboured successfully for the benefit of the church, and the good of their country.

In consequence of repeated and urgent applications from America, the synod took into consideration the propriety of sending a mission to that part of the globe. But their licentiates were, at this time, so few, and the demands for their services at home so numerous, that they were obliged to defer, from time to time, undertaking a transatlantic mission. They agreed, however, in April 1754, to send one of their own number to labour for a few months in North America. The choice fell upon Mr. Thomas Clerk, minister of Ballibea in Ireland. He was appointed to sail for Pennsylvania in the month of August, and he was to continue labouring in that province, and in other places where his services might be required, till the beginning of April in the following year, when he was to be at liberty to return home. This appointment Mr. Clerk was prevented from fulfilling, by reasons which the synod sustained as valid. The American petitioners, after waiting two years longer, sent another representation (May 1756), in which they expressed the disappointment they had received, by Mr. Clerk's not coming amongst them; and they earnestly craved that the synod "would exercise bowels of compassion towards them, and send them an able and faithful minister with all possible speed, that so the Lord's scattered remnant might be gathered together, the bread of life broken amongst them, and the Redeemer's interest and kingdom promoted in the country and continent where they

\* Life of Ebenezer Erskine, p. 482

lived." The synod appointed a committee to write a friendly letter to the petitioners, and to state to them, that they were prevented by the want of preachers from granting their request at present.

From the commencement of the Secession, frequent opportunities were given to the people, of observing days of humiliation or of thanksgiving, according to the varying aspects of divine providence. At every half-yearly meeting of synod, it was usual to appoint one or two of the brethren to mark the dispensations of providence, that might occur before next ordinary meeting, and to prepare the draught of an act, in which were embodied the reasons of humiliation or of thanksgiving, according to the nature of the events. Though there was a danger of these exercises degenerating into a mere matter of routine, yet they were calculated, by the frequency of their return, to cherish devotional habits in the people, and to accustom them to mark the hand of an over-ruling providence in the public occurrences of the day. In these periodical documents, the usual title of which was, "An Act for a Fast," the synod recorded their sentiments concerning passing events, and they mourned over the sins which prevailed, not only in their own community, but throughout the land. In looking over a considerable number of these, I find in each a strong expression of attachment to the person of the reigning sovereign, and fervent prayers offered up for his preservation, and for the welfare of the different branches of the royal family; also a lively interest expressed in the success of his Majesty's arms, which the synod seems, at this period, to have connected with the maintenance of the protestant religion.

The following paragraph, from one of these acts, is inserted as a specimen:—"The synod call on all under their inspection to cry earnestly at the throne of God, that he would return to the present generation, revive a covenanted work of reformation, turn all ranks from the evil of their ways to himself, make iniquity as ashamed to hide its head, and reclaim from those abominations which lay the foundation of his quarrel against us; that he may bless our sovereign King George, and all the branches of the royal family; go forth with our armies, and grant them success against our enemies; reform our army and navy from the abounding wickednesses that take place among them, whereby he might justly be provoked to make them, like Ephraim, faintly turn back in the day of battle, and deliver them into the hands of their enemies; that he may sanctify unto us, and the whole generation, the two late defeats which our armies have suffered, the one in France, and the other in America; that he would conduct and guide his Prussian Majesty, preserve him from dangers to which

he is so much exposed in the field of battle, and make him, and the rest of the protestant princes at the head of the protestant armies in Germany, more and more instrumental in bringing down those powers that are the support of the beast."

The pressure of business had hitherto prevented the synod from giving attention to the overture which was laid before them, in November 1753, concerning the alleged mistakes in the Act and Testimony, and other official documents. A meeting of the synod was appointed to be held, specially for this purpose, at Glasgow, in the month of March, 1755. All the members were earnestly requested to attend; and such as might be prevented from attending, were required to send their sentiments in writing, so that the synod might thereby be the better enabled to judge in the matter. The synod met on the 4th of March, and continued their deliberations during that and the two following days. After having read the overture, paragraph by paragraph, and made a variety of amendments upon it, the question was put, "Whether they should now pass it into an act, or appoint a committee to get it printed and circulated in its amended form, so that not only the members of synod, but all concerned, might have it under their consideration, before it should be finally adopted?" This latter part of the alternative was adopted; and Messrs. James Fisher, John M'Cara, John Brown, and Daniel Cock, were appointed a committee to superintend the publication of the overture.

A transaction took place about this time, which, on account of the publicity of it, and on account of several ministers connected with the Establishment being involved in it, occasioned great scandal among the friends of religion in Scotland. This was the publication of a tragedy (Douglas) by Mr. John Home of Athelstaneford, a minister of the national church; and the countenance given to the representation of it on the stage, by the attendance of several of his brethren at the theatre. It was not to be expected that such an outrage upon the religious feelings of the country should be permitted to pass unnoticed or uncensured. The theatre was, at this period, a proscribed amusement in Edinburgh. By an act of the legislature, passed in the year 1737, it was declared, "That every person who should, for hire or reward, act, or cause to be acted, any play, or other entertainment of the stage, without the special licence and authority mentioned in the said act, should be deemed a rogue and a vagabond, and for every such offence should forfeit the sum of £50."\* Soon after the passing of this act, an attempt was made to obtain a licensed theatre in

\* Scots Magazine for 1757, p. 18.

Edinburgh. But a petition being presented by the professors of the University, supported by the magistrates, setting forth the dangerous tendency of a play-house, the attempt was frustrated. The players, however, endeavoured to act in opposition to the law. A process was instituted against them, before the Court of Session, at the instance of the Presbytery of Edinburgh, and a verdict obtained. They were fined in the statutory penalty of £50; and not choosing to pay the fine, warrants were issued for their apprehension, when they fled from justice. Another party succeeded to those whom the presbytery had thus put to flight, and they endeavoured to elude the law, by calling their place of entertainment, not a *play-house* but a *concert-hall*.\*

Home's tragedy of Douglas was brought upon the stage, for the first time, on the 14th of December, 1756. The house was crowded to excess with the rank and literature of the Scottish metropolis. Besides the author himself, there were present the following ministers of the church of Scotland:—Messrs. Carlyle of Inveresk, White of Liberton, Home of Polwarth, Scot of Westruther, Dysart of Eccles, Cupples of Swinton, and Steel of Stair. The Edinburgh presbytery, within whose bounds the offence was given, immediately wrote letters to the presbyteries, to which these ministers severally belonged, complaining of their conduct, and calling upon the presbyteries to adopt measures for vindicating the credit of the holy ministry, and supporting the interests of religion. Mr. White, who belonged to the Edinburgh presbytery, was summoned before them, and, having expressed sorrow for his conduct, was suspended from the exercise of his ministry for a short period. The other ministers appeared before their respective presbyteries, and submitted to rebuke for the offence which they had given, with the exception of Messrs. Home and Carlyle. Mr. Home, after a delay of several months, gave in the demission of his charge to the presbytery of Haddington. Mr. Carlyle obeyed the summons given him to appear before the presbytery of Dalkeith; but refused at first to make any explicit acknowledgment of his being at the theatre, or to express any sorrow for his conduct. In consequence of his refusal, the presbytery were under the necessity of giving him a libel.

The libel contained three articles of charge:—1. That Mr. Carlyle had associated familiarly with players—persons who, by their profession, and in the eye of the law, were of bad repute. 2. That he had attended the rehearsal of the tragedy of Douglas, and given assistance and direction to the players

\* Scots Magazine for 1757, p. 18.

on that occasion. 3. That he had appeared openly in the play-house in the Canongate, "within a few miles of his own parish, near to a university-seat, and hard by the city of Edinburgh, where he was well known, having often preached and assisted at the administration of the Lord's Supper in that city."\* Mr. Carlyle objected to this form of procedure. He gave in a paper, in which he substantially admitted the charges preferred against him, and expressed sorrow that he had given offence; but contended that these charges did not form a proper ground for a libel and a public trial, and prayed that the libel might be dismissed. Notwithstanding Mr. Carlyle's objection, the presbytery sustained the relevancy of the libel, and found the various articles of it established by his own confession; but referred the consideration of the whole matter to the synod, giving it as their opinion, that Mr. Carlyle deserved a higher censure than a rebuke, and that the censure ought to be inflicted, not by any inferior court, but by the Assembly.

A long debate ensued in the synod of Lothian and Tweeddale, which terminated in the following motion being carried:—"The synod finds, That the grounds of proceeding in this affair, in the way of a libel, are not sufficiently clear and uncontrovertible; and that it had been better and more expedient for the presbytery to have endeavoured to bring the same to an issue, either in the way of privy-censure, or of brotherly conference, with proper admonition following thereon. And further, the synod does, by this sentence, declare their high displeasure with Mr. Carlyle for the step he has taken in going to the theatre, and strictly enjoin him to abstain therefrom in time coming." The presbytery were not satisfied with this decision, and carried the matter by appeal, before the General Assembly. The Assembly affirmed, by a large majority, the synod's decision. They further adopted an overture to the following effect:—"The General Assembly, considering how much the success of the gospel depends on the regular and inoffensive behaviour of the ministers of this church, do earnestly recommend to the several presbyteries to take such wise and effectual measures as may promote the spirit of our holy religion, and preserve the purity and decorum of the ministerial character; and that they take care that none of the ministers of this church do, upon any occasion, attend the theatre."†

The Associate synod were scandalized at the public encouragement which had been given by ministers of the gospel to theatrical entertainments. They considered it their duty to bear testimony against it. In one of their acts, appointing a

\* Scots Magazine for 1751, p. 159.

† Ibid. p. 217.

day of fasting, they refer to it in strong condemnatory terms. "Many," say they, "are practically studying to outbrave a threatening and punishing God, by proceeding to greater lengths in infidelity, profanity, pride, luxury, revelling, seminaries of lewdness, and other like abominations; not only civil judges, but even named presbyterian ministers, become attenders on, and encouragers of, stage-plays; nay, one of these ministers hath written, and caused to be acted in both kingdoms, a sinful and scandalous tragedy; while many others of the same denomination encourage men in ignorance, and many other evils, by bestowing as little pains as possible in ministerially instructing and warning those committed to their charge, many of whom, alas! love to have it so; by which means the generation is more and more disposed towards the embracing of popery, or whatever other abominations they may be tempted to."

Some years had now elapsed since the synod resolved that there should be synodical, as well as presbyterial and sessional, privy-censures. The formulas of questions that were appointed to be put to elders in sessions, and to ministers in presbyteries, have already been recorded. A third formula of questions was prepared, with a view to be put to presbyteries at the synodical privy-censures. But the consideration of it, owing to the press of other matters, was delayed from one meeting to another; and it was not till April, 1757, that the synod, after a careful revision, gave it their final sanction. The following are the questions that were appointed to be put to presbyteries at these privy-censures:—

1. Doth your presbytery meet frequently, when the business before you requires the same?
2. Do you take care that elders from kirk-sessions attend your meeting of presbytery, as well as ministers?
3. Do you censure absent members, who do not send up, or at next meetings give, a relevant excuse?
4. Do you endeavour to be as punctual as possible in convening at the hour appointed, for the several sederunts of your presbytery, that the people who have business with you may not be obliged to a tedious and needless attendance?
5. Hath your presbytery a Bible, a Confession of Faith, and a copy of the Acts of Assembly before them at your several meetings?
6. Are you careful, when you are reasoning one with another in presbytery, to shun all warm and wrathful expressions, and to behave with a spirit of meekness and brotherly love, as it becometh brethren who are met in presence and name of the Lord Jesus?
7. Do you appoint your members by turns, to deliver an

exercise and addition before each of your presbyterial meetings, when you have not young men upon trials; and do you pass judgment upon these discourses of your brethren?

8. Do you read the minutes of the preceding meeting of synod, in your first meeting of presbytery after they come to hand, that you may give timeous obedience to what may be enjoined you by the synod at said meeting thereof?

9. Hath your presbytery a register for their minutes, and are you careful in revising them, before they be engrossed therein, and that each moderator, together with the clerk, sign the minutes in the register that were passed during the time of his being moderator?

10. Is the sacrament of the Lord's Supper dispensed in every congregation of your bounds, at least once in the year?

11. Is your presbytery cautious in admitting entrants to the University: Are you strict and accurate in the trials, not only of their literature, but of their piety, prudence, and former godly conversation and walk; and do you propose the questions ordinarily put to young men before their licence?

12. Hath your presbytery observed a diet for prayer and privy-censure since last meeting of synod?

13. Have the members of your presbytery satisfied you, at the said diet for privy-censure, about their diligence in lecturing and preaching every Lord's day, in examining their congregations, visiting families therein, and the sick, when called, and in endeavouring to be edifying in their conversation and discourse among the people; and that they are not guilty of administering private baptism, or celebrating clandestine or irregular marriages?

14. Have you parochial visitations within your bounds, for inquiring into the state of your congregations, and the diligence of ministers, according to the rules of the church?

These questions, with the presbyterial and sessional interrogatories formerly inserted, furnish us with an interesting view of the strictness of presbyterian discipline in former times. They show how complete was the superintendence exercised by the supreme court over the inferior judicatories, and how thoroughly knit together the various parts of the association were, from the lowest to the highest. The regular working of such an organization was fitted to give a powerful impulse to the body, and to preserve each part of it in a state of healthful action. Though some of the questions may be deemed minute, and though there might be considerable difficulty in keeping a system of such strictness in active operation, yet certainly such a thorough superintendence, such a complete identifying of one part of the body with another, was calculated to produce most beneficial effects. Should there be some who

think that our fathers in the Secession erred in being too strict, and that their views of presbyterian government were impracticable, there is at least equally good ground for affirming that their children have run into an opposite extreme, and that there is a strong tendency, at the present time to destroy the unity and efficiency of presbyterianism, by leaving each subordinate body to act for itself, without any regard to the authority of the supreme controlling power. I do not plead for the exercise of despotic power in any court, either civil or ecclesiastical; but it is incumbent on all those who hold that presbytery is the form of church government most in accordance with the word of God, to take care that it do not degenerate into a mere name. While the forms of it are observed, exertions ought to be made to keep alive the spirit of it, by the due maintenance of subordination in the different parts of the body, and by a thorough and efficient superintendence being exercised by the supreme power over every, even the minutest, portion of the association.

The first instance mentioned in the synod records, of their engaging in the exercise of privy-censure, was at their meeting in May 1762. Each presbytery\* was called before them *seriatim*, and the above questions were proposed. The synod expressed themselves satisfied with the answers which the several presbyteries returned to the whole of the questions, with the exception of those which related to the keeping of presbytery registers, and to parochial visitations. The presbyteries were found to be deficient in these particulars, and the moderator, in name of the synod, recommended it to them to be more attentive to these matters in time to come. At the September meeting, the synod again engaged in the same exercise. The presbyteries were called in the order of the roll, and to each was the formula of questions proposed. Members were then required to express their opinion; and the result was, that the conduct of the presbytery of Down, in Ireland, was approved of; the presbyteries of Glasgow and Dunfermline were found not to have been sufficiently attentive to parochial visitations; while the synod expressed themselves dissatisfied with the answers which the Edinburgh presbytery returned to a considerable number of the questions. The faulty presbyteries were enjoined to be more attentive for the future. After this it was resolved, that meetings for privy-censure should be held by the presbyteries only once a-year, and the twelfth question of the above formula was altered accordingly.

During the course of these proceedings, the synod were a

\* The presbyteries belonging to the synod, at this period, were three in Scotland, viz. Edinburgh, Glasgow, and Dunfermline; and one in Ireland, viz. the presbytery of Down.

good deal engaged in discussing the subject of covenanting. Some of the brethren were afraid lest the practice of covenanting should grow into disuse, and the attention of the synod was called to it, by an overture from the presbytery of Edinburgh, in August 1757. The purport of the overture was, that as the Lord "was awfully threatening to avenge the quarrel of our breach of covenant;" and as "the bulk of the generation were denying the binding obligation of the covenants," the synod should take into consideration what was "present duty" in this matter. The synod deferred the consideration of the overture till their next meeting; and, in the meantime, presbyteries were required to turn their attention to the subject, so that each might be prepared to state what course it would be proper for the synod to adopt. Twelve months elapsed before the subject was resumed. At the end of that period, none of the presbyteries, with the exception of the presbytery of Edinburgh, had any specific measure to propose. The overture from the presbytery of Edinburgh was read; and, after some discussion, a committee was appointed to take into consideration overtures from all the presbyteries on this subject, and to prepare a draught out of the whole, to be laid before the synod at a subsequent meeting. This committee consisted of Messrs. James Fisher, John M'Cara, John Brown, and John Jervey, ministers, with Robert Jack, elder. The presbyteries of Glasgow and Dunfermline were required to send up to the committee what they had to propose on the subject of covenanting.

The committee's report was presented to the synod, on the 10th of May, 1759; and, after being read, copies of it were ordered to be transmitted to the three presbyteries in Scotland, that they might be the better prepared, at next meeting of synod, to give a decision concerning it. At several successive meetings of synod, the reports of the presbyteries were called for; but the uniform answer was, "that they were not yet in ripeness to give an opinion upon this affair. It was not till the month of October 1761, that the presbyteries were "ripe" to give a deliverance upon this business. At that meeting the synod, after hearing the opinion of the presbyteries, proceeded to consider the draught which their committee had prepared. The Acknowledgment of Sins prefixed to the Bond was read from the printed copy, and compared with the manuscript copy, amendments and corrections being made as they proceeded. But being prevented by the pressure of other business, from completing their work, they appointed a special meeting of synod to be held for this purpose at Glasgow, on the 17th of March, the ensuing spring. This meeting was thinly attended, there being only nine ministers and three

elders present. After reasoning for some time on the subject of covenanting, a motion was made and agreed to, that, instead of proceeding farther at present with the consideration of the draught, they should consider their overture, printed in the year 1755, concerning historical mistakes alleged to be in the Testimony, and other official papers, and determine how far said overture was right or wrong; and that thereafter a new edition of the Testimony should be printed, with such corrections as might be made, previous to any farther step being taken on the subject of covenanting. As there were so few members present, they deferred the review of the overture till a future meeting.

In the month of August, this business was resumed at a meeting which had been specially appointed for the purpose. The synod entered upon a review of the overture which had been printed in the year 1755. After a sederunt had been spent in this work, a proposal was made by some members, that they should sist procedure with regard to the present overture, and that they should proceed to consider the act of the Associate Presbytery, printed in the year 1744 (making covenanting a term of ministerial and Christian communion), as a bar in the way of present procedure, and that they should either approve of, or rescind the same; or determine whether any form of covenanting that may hereafter be adopted by the synod, shall be such a term of communion. This proposal was overruled, and the synod proceeded with the consideration of the overture concerning the historical mistakes. This overture was in the shape of a bulky pamphlet; and, after the synod had read upwards of forty pages of it, and reasoned at considerable length upon it, they found that it would be inexpedient to convert it into an act, after it had been so long postponed; but they agreed to appoint, at their next meeting, a committee to review the historical part of the Testimony, and to correct any mistakes that might be in it; and that thereafter, a new edition of it should be published, in such a manner as might be judged most expedient.

In the following month (September), the synod resumed the consideration of the overture on covenanting. When they were about to enter upon the consideration of it, Messrs. John Pattison, John M'Cara, and John Belfrage craved that it should be marked as their opinion, that the act of the Associate Presbytery, in 1744, making the renewing of the covenants a term of Christian and ministerial communion in all time coming, and making the oath reduplicate on the Confession of Sins, was a bar in their way of concurring, in any form or plan of renewing the covenants, unless the synod should declare it as their mind, that such things ought not to be pushed

as terms of communion. After a long discussion on the subject of covenanting, the synod appointed Messrs. James Fisher, John M'Cara, John Smith, and John Brown, a committee, to correct any mistakes that might be found in the historical part of the Testimony, and to prepare a draught of the Acknowledgment of Sins, to be prefixed to the Bond. They appointed them also to prepare an overture with regard to the act of presbytery, adopted in 1744, making covenanting a term of communion. This committee reported at next meeting, that they had proceeded so far in the business; but, after this, nothing farther was done in the matter for a considerable period, and the subject of covenanting was, for a season, allowed to go to sleep.

## CHAPTER XVI.

Schism—overture—Discussions in General Assembly concerning it—Overture rejected—Overture discussed in periodicals—Collection made for presbyterian ministers in America—Collection for evangelizing North American Indians—Petitions for sermon from Philadelphia and Truro—Messrs. Telfar and Kinloch sent to America—Coalescence betwixt Burgher and Anti-burgher brethren in America—Messrs. Cock and Smith sent to Nova Scotia—Prosperous state of the Secession—Mr. John Swanston chosen Professor of Divinity—Death of Mr. Swanston—Succeeded in the professorship by Mr. John Brown—Enactment concerning students of divinity—Students' library formed—Pastoral warning issued by Synod—Extract from it—Proceedings concerning Messrs. John M'Cara and David Horn—Important decision of Synod—Death of Mr. Fisher—His character—Decision of Synod concerning the Annat—Fund instituted for behoof of ministers' widows—Re-exhibition of the Testimony—Sentiments of the Synod concerning the national church—Vindicate their continuing in a state of secession—Proposal to repeal the penal laws against Roman Catholics in Scotland—Great alarm excited by the proposal—The subject discussed in General Assembly—Resolutions of provincial synods—Associate Synod publish a "Warning against Popery"—Extracts from it—Remarks on the repeal of the penal laws—Increase of Secession in Ireland—Synod of Ireland formed—Deputation sent to Irish Synod—Petitions for union with the Anti-burgher brethren—Union not accomplished—Formula improved—Regulations concerning students of divinity—Overture about mode of preaching—Death of Professor Brown—His character—His exhortation to Synod—Mr. George Lawson appointed Professor of Divinity—Synod publish "Warning against Socinianism"—Agree to celebrate the centenary of the Revolution—Conference with members of Reformed Presbytery—Institution of fund for supporting weak congregations, and aged ministers—American affairs—Formation of Associate Reformed Synod of North America—New missions to Nova Scotia—London Missionary Society—Associate Synod resolve to support it—Liberal collections made for it by Secession—Salary of probationers increased—Petition of probationers—Ministers appointed to itinerate—Secession in Manchester.

THE rapid increase of the Secession began to excite alarm in the bosom of the friends of the Establishment. Whatever hopes might have been entertained that the prosperity of the Secession would be checked by the rupture which had taken place in that body, time had shown that these hopes were ill-founded; for, in each section of the Secession, the number of congregations was steadily on the increase. The arbitrary course pursued by the ruling party in the national church, the total disregard of the wishes of the people in the settlement of their ministers, and the neglect of the duties of the ministerial office by those whom the law of patronage had thrust into the Scottish parishes, tended to produce a widespread feeling of disgust in the minds of the people, who, finding so little attention paid to their spiritual improvement by

those who professed to take the oversight of their souls, fled from their ministry, and swelled, from year to year, the ranks of the Secession.

On the 31st of May, 1765, an overture was introduced into the General Assembly, calling the attention of that court to the progress of dissent, and praying that they would adopt such measures as, in their wisdom, they should judge proper for arresting "this alarming evil." This overture (usually denominated the Schism-overture) was to the following effect:—"As the progress of the schism in this church is so very remarkable, and seems to be on the growing hand, as it is credibly affirmed that there are now one hundred and twenty meeting-houses erected, to which more than a hundred thousand persons resort, who were formerly of our communion, but have now separated themselves from the Church of Scotland; and that the effects of this schism begin to appear, and are likely to take root, in the greatest and most populous towns; it is humbly overtured, That the Venerable Assembly would take under their mature consideration this alarming evil, which hath so threatening an aspect to this church, to the interests of religion, and to the peace of the country; and that they would provide such remedies against this schism, as in their great wisdom they shall judge proper."\*

After this overture was read and considered, two motions were made,—1. "That the overture should be transmitted to the several presbyteries, and they appointed to inquire after the number of meeting-houses erected by those who have seceded from this church, and the state of the congregations thereto belonging; as also to inquire concerning the rise, progress, and causes of such secessions; and to transmit what information they receive to the next Assembly." 2. "That a committee should be appointed to consider the overture, and report their opinion thereupon to the next General Assembly." Long reasoning ensued upon these two motions; and the question being put, "Transmit or Appoint?" it carried, by a great majority, "Appoint." A committee was accordingly appointed, consisting of twenty-three ministers and sixteen ruling elders.†

The report of the committee, which was presented to the Assembly on the 30th of May, 1766, was to the following effect:—"In respect of the dangerous consequences that are to be apprehended from the increase of secession from the legal establishment of this church, and as it is reported that no fewer than one hundred and twenty meeting-houses are already erected, although it never was, nor is, intended that any sort

\* Scots Magazine, vol. xxvii. p. 277.

† Ibid.

of severity should be used against any of these persons, it is overtured, that it may be recommended to inquire into the truth of this fact: And further, as the abuse of the right of patronage has been one chief occasion of the progress of secession, it is also overtured, that the General Assembly would be pleased to consider what methods may be employed to remedy so great an evil; and it is humbly submitted, whether it may not be expedient, for this purpose, to appoint a committee to correspond with presbyteries, and gentlemen of property and influence, and to report." This report occasioned a long debate. The Assembly agreed, without a vote, to pass from the first part of it, recommending the remit to presbyteries to inquire into the number of Secession meeting-houses. With regard to the second part, which recommended the appointment of a committee to inquire into the abuse of the right of patronage, a vote was stated, "Approve, or Reject?" when it carried, by a majority of ninety-nine to eighty-five, to reject. Thus the whole of the overture fell to the ground, and the "alarming evil" was permitted to go on, without any attempt being made to check it.\*

Those who prepared the schism-overture seem to have been endowed with the gift of prophecy, when they spoke of the effects of the schism as "likely to take root in the greatest and most populous towns." Had they lived at the present day, how deeply affected must they have been, to behold the "schism" not only firmly rooted in "the greatest and most populous towns," but widely spread throughout the peaceful rural villages; so that there is scarcely a hamlet, however obscure, where a branch of it may not be seen. If the framers of the overture trembled at the threatening aspect which the "schism" bore to the National church, upwards of seventy years ago, when there were only one hundred and twenty meeting-houses, what must have been their feelings of alarm to find that the number of meeting-houses, belonging to the different classes of dissenters, had increased to upwards of six hundred! While truth compels me to say, that the aspect which the present state of dissent in this country bears to the National church, is sufficiently threatening, it is pleasing to add, that none of the other evils which were anticipated from the progress of the "schism" have taken place. The interests of religion, so far from having sustained any injury from this cause, have rather been promoted; and the peace of the country, concerning which such fears were entertained by these alarmists, has been maintained.

During the period that elapsed from the introduction of the

\* Scots Magazine, vol. xxviii. p. 275.

schism-overture into the General Assembly, till its fate was decided, the subject of it was discussed by several writers, in one of the literary periodicals of the day.\* It was suspected by some, that the secret object of those who introduced the overture, was to put down the Secession by force. Mr. Adam Gib, in a letter addressed by him to the editor of the periodical now referred to, adverts, in pointed terms, to this suspicion; and he shrewdly observes, that should this be the real object of the overture, "it was near seventy-seven years out of time."† He mentions with satisfaction, in the conclusion of his letter, that, according to his information, "the overture was far from being relished in the General Assembly, by the majority of either the reverend or honourable members of the court; and that their putting it into the hands of a committee was no act of favour to it, but was carried in opposition to a transmitting of it to the several presbyteries, which the friends of that overture insisted for. However (he adds), even supposing the worst, the Seceders have ground of confidence, that a suppressing of the testimony among their hands, whatever might be done with their persons, would prove too hard work for all the people of the earth."

Another writer in the same periodical,‡ while he disclaims all intention, on the part of the supporters of the overture, of having recourse to violence, states, in strong terms, the necessity of some measure being adopted to arrest the progress of the "schism," otherwise they might anticipate the subversion of the National church, by government withdrawing from it their support. The following language, written upwards of seventy years ago, may be regarded as almost prophetic of a crisis which appears to be rapidly approaching:—"As its increase (*viz.* of the schism) threatens no less than the extinction of the very being of a National church, a principle of self-preservation seems to have dictated this proceeding, which, I apprehend, can give the alarm to none but such as wish the total subversion of this church. An established church, without a general adherence, or from which the body of the people are alienated, appears to be an object not worthy the notice, the care, or the protection of any government. Presbytery was first established in Scotland, because it was agreeable to the inclinations of the people; and if these are withdrawn or lost, it is not easy to see what title the present established clergy would have to a maintenance from the government, preferably to those of any other denomination." After the minds both of churchmen and dissenters had been agitated for twelve months, by the discussions concerning the overture, the mat-

\* Scots Magazine, vol. xxviii. p. 275. † Ibid. vol. xxvii. p. 230. ‡ P. 565.

ter was allowed to rest. The ruling party in the General Assembly did not think proper to gratify the people, by permitting any inquiry to be made into the abuse of the right of patronage; and the meeting-houses of dissenters continued to multiply as formerly.

The attention of the Associate synod was now drawn toward America. Owing to the rapid increase of the synod's congregations at home, and the demands that were made upon them for preachers to supply these congregations, they had not as yet been able to undertake a transatlantic mission. They had, however, given substantial proofs of the interest which they took in the diffusion of the gospel in the American provinces, by appointing, on two different occasions, collections to be made for the purpose of assisting those who were engaged in this benevolent work. The first of these collections was made for the relief of poor presbyterian ministers in the province of Pennsylvania, and in the counties of Newcastle, Kent, and Sussex-upon-Delaware, who were exposed to considerable hardships in preaching the gospel to the Indians. This fund was designed also to give support to the widows and orphans of these ministers. The sum collected for it by the Associate synod, amounted to £138; and a friendly letter was despatched along with it to the corporation in America, under whose management the fund was placed. A letter of thanks was received from the corporation, acknowledging, in the warmest terms, the liberality of the synod, and stating that the money would be applied with the strictest fidelity in accomplishing the ends proposed.

Very soon after this, an application was made to the synod from the Society for Propagating Christian Knowledge, requesting their co-operation in a scheme for evangelizing the North American Indians. The particulars of this scheme have been detailed in a preceding part of the narrative.\* The synod cordially approved of the object which the Society proposed accomplishing; and they appointed a collection to be made throughout the association, to assist in carrying it into effect.

On the 15th of May, 1765, petitions were laid before the synod from Truro in Nova Scotia, and from Philadelphia in the province of Pennsylvania, stating, in strong terms, the destitute circumstances in which the petitioners were placed with regard to the gospel, and earnestly requesting that the synod would send some of their brethren to labour amongst them. The synod resolved, that they would not any longer delay sending a mission to these colonies. They had not

\* See page 275.

at this time any preacher whom they could conveniently send, but they resolved to send an ordained minister to labour for a few months in America, while the brethren undertook to supply his charge at home. Mr. David Telfar, minister at Bridge of Teith, was the person whom the synod appointed as their first transatlantic missionary. The following were the instructions given him by the synod, in reference to his mission. He was to proceed first to Philadelphia, and after labouring there for some time, he was then to repair to Truro. In each of these places he was to ordain elders, if he should see it to be for edification. And as Mr. Thomas Clerk had been sent over in the preceding year, by the presbytery of Down, to the province of New York, he and Mr. Telfar were empowered by the synod to constitute a presbytery for the management of discipline, and for making such arrangements as might be necessary to secure the success of the mission. Should application be made to Mr. Telfar from any other places besides the two above-mentioned, he was to visit them; and after making himself acquainted with the circumstances of the people, he was to write home to the synod a particular account of the state of affairs, that measures might be adopted for sending a permanent supply of sermon.

The hopes of the American petitioners were for a season disappointed. Mr. Telfar did not find it convenient to leave this country so soon as had been fixed upon by the synod. In the month of September, the same year, an application was received from some of the inhabitants of New Cambridge, in the county of Albany and province of New York, representing, in strong terms, their destitute condition with regard to the gospel, and craving that the synod would send them, without delay, a minister to break amongst them the bread of life; at the same time promising to give to the person who should be sent a suitable maintenance. The synod having taken this petition into consideration, as well as the applications formerly made from Philadelphia and Truro, resolved to send both an ordained minister and a preacher; but delayed making the appointment till the month of November, when they were again to meet for the despatch of other business. In the mean time, they recommended it to Messrs. Thomas Main, Daniel Cock, and Joseph Ker (ministers), and to Messrs. Thomas Edmond, John Bennet, and Samuel Kinloch (probationers), that they should, previous to that period, take the subject of an American mission under their consideration.

The synod met on the 12th November, when another communication was received from the people in Philadelphia, stating the disappointment which they had experienced, in consequence of Mr. Telfar not having fulfilled the appointment

formerly given, and mentioning that they had erected a place of worship, and had otherwise made provision for the support of the gospel among them. They stated further, that the division which had taken place in consequence of the controversy concerning the burgess-oath, was producing very unhappy effects in their own neighbourhood, and that there had been overtures between Mr. Thomas Clerk and the presbytery of Pennsylvania, adhering to the Antiburgher synod, for effecting a coalescence, in so far as the American Seceders were concerned: and they earnestly besought the synod to adopt measures for accomplishing a union between them and their Antiburgher brethren, so that they might be one again in the Lord, both at home and abroad. They concluded by urging their request, that the synod would encourage their infant congregation, by sending Mr. Telfar, or some other able minister, to remain among them so long as should be judged proper.

In answer to this communication, the synod renewed their appointment to Mr. Telfar, to go on a mission to America early in the spring, and they agreed to send along with him Mr. Samuel Kinloch, probationer. These two brethren were to remain in America till April 1767, unless the synod should see fit either to recall them sooner, or to extend their appointments. They were to preach not only in Philadelphia, New Cambridge, and Truro, but in any other places where they might find an opening; and the instructions formerly given to Mr. Telfar, with regard to ordaining elders, and constituting a presbytery with Mr. Clerk, for the administration of discipline, were renewed. Should Mr. Kinloch receive a call from any congregation in America, these two brethren were empowered to take him on trials, and to ordain him; and in the mean time, until said presbytery should meet, Mr. Kinloch was to be under the direction of Mr. Telfar, with regard to the places where he should preach.

Mr. Telfar and his fellow-labourer sailed for America in the spring of 1766; and after they had been a few months in that country, Mr. Telfar wrote home to the synod, that a coalescence had taken place, on the 5th of June, between him and the Antiburgher brethren belonging to the Pennsylvanian presbytery. Mr. Clerk had coalesced with them before Mr. Telfar's arrival. He stated, that Mr. Kinloch had gone to Truro, and that as he himself was inclined to return home, he wished the synod to consider the state of matters in America, and send some one to supply his place. On receiving Mr. Telfar's communication, the synod agreed that he should be permitted to return home in the beginning of the following year, if he should then feel inclined; but that Mr. Kinloch

should continue to labour among the American congregations until the next ordinary meeting of synod, when they would decide about recalling him, or extending his appointment, and when they would take into consideration the sending of farther supply.

In May 1767, the synod received letters from the congregations in Philadelphia, New Cambridge, and Truro, expressing their warmest thanks for the benefit which they had received from the ministrations of Messrs. Telfar and Kinloch, and beseeching that the synod would either permit these brethren to continue among them, or, should they be removed, that others might be speedily sent to supply their place. A communication was at the same time received, signed by upwards of forty of the inhabitants of Londonderry, in Nova Scotia, in which they stated the great destitution of gospel ordinances which had prevailed for a long time in that place, and the joy which they experienced when visited by Mr. Kinloch. They earnestly entreated the synod to commiserate their condition, and to send some of their number to preach the gospel to them, that they might in due time enjoy the inestimable blessing of a fixed gospel ministry. Fettered though the synod were by the scarcity of preachers at home, they appointed one of their probationers, Mr. Thomas Waters, to set off for America by the earliest opportunity; and the presbytery of Edinburgh were enjoined to ordain him previous to his departure. But Mr. Waters was prevented, by bodily indisposition, from fulfilling his appointment. During the course of this summer, the people in Philadelphia wrote, that both they and the congregation in Truro had given a call to Mr. Kinloch, but that, as the call from Truro had been given before theirs, they were willing to resign their claim in favour of their brethren in that place; and they requested that Mr. Telfar might be continued among them, as he was peculiarly adapted, by his gifts, for that situation; and should he be willing to remain, they had a view to him as their minister. They further mentioned, that, in consequence of the coalescence which had taken place between the synod's missionaries and the Anti-burgher brethren in Pennsylvania, great harmony now prevailed.

When the synod met in May 1768, they nominated two of their probationers, Mr. Thomas Edmond and Mr. James Mitchell, to go on a mission to America; but the issue of this appointment was equally unsuccessful with the one already mentioned. In the meantime, Mr. Kinloch refused to accept of the call given him by the congregation in Truro. He returned to Scotland early in 1769, and having received, soon after his return, a call from a congregation in Paisley, he was

ordained, during the course of the summer, in that town. Mr. Telfar also returned home in the end of that year, or in the spring of the year following; and the congregations in America were for a short period left destitute of preachers. The synod, however, were engaged in making provision for their supply. At their meeting in August, 1769, in answer to a letter from the people in Truro, making an appeal to their sympathy, they agreed that Mr. Daniel Cock, minister at Greenock, and Mr. David Smith, minister at St. Andrews, should be sent to Nova Scotia. In giving these brethren instructions respecting their mission, they recommended it to them to exert themselves to the utmost to maintain the articles of agreement which had been entered into between Messrs. Telfar, Mason, and the other brethren in America; and though they empowered them to constitute themselves into a presbytery in Nova Scotia, for the purposes of discipline and government, yet they cautioned them against making use of that power for encroaching on the authority of the Seceding presbytery of Pennsylvania, unless they should be obliged to do so, by that presbytery's refusing to maintain the articles of agreement.

Mr. Cock sailed soon after this for his destination; and a call being given him by the congregation in Truro, the pastoral relation between him and his flock in Greenock was dissolved, and he was the first minister in connexion with the Associate synod, who permanently settled in Nova Scotia. Mr. Smith did not accompany him, as was at first intended. A petition was received by the synod in August, 1770, from some of the inhabitants of Nottingham in Pennsylvania, praying that a minister might be sent to labour amongst them, and expressing at the same time a particular desire to enjoy the services of Mr. Telfar. The synod resolved, that Mr. Telfar's connexion with his congregation at Bridge of Teith should be dissolved, and that he should be sent out a second time to America. They also appointed Mr. Smith's relation to his people at St. Andrews to be loosed, that he might accompany Mr. Telfar across the Atlantic. It was left optional to these two brethren to go either to Pennsylvania or to Nova Scotia; and a collection was enjoined to be made in all the congregations of the synod, to defray the expense of the mission. They both set sail for Pennsylvania in the summer of 1771. Mr. Telfar settled in that province, while Mr. Smith went to Londonderry in Nova Scotia, and continued labouring there during the remainder of his days.

The progress which the Secession Church was making, both at home and abroad, must have been gratifying to its friends. If a sufficient supply of preachers could have been

procured to answer the numerous demands that were made upon it for sermon from almost all districts of the country, as well as from America, its increase would have been still more rapid. Both branches of the Secession were at this period greatly fettered in their operations, by a scarcity of probationers. This evil operated in two ways. When congregations became vacant, after having enjoyed the benefits of a fixed gospel ministry, or when new congregations were formed, they were obliged, in many instances, to remain for a considerable period destitute of a pastor. The same cause rendered it a matter of great difficulty for the Secession to undertake missions to distant lands. The number of their congregations increased much more rapidly at home than they could find preachers to supply them, and in proportion to the increase of their congregations, was the difficulty of finding suitable agents to send abroad.

In the course of little more than twenty years after the breach had taken place, that section of the Secession, whose history I am now recording, had nearly quadrupled the number of its ministers. Forty-one of these were labouring in Scotland and England, about eight or ten in Ireland, and three in America. The number of probationers on its list amounted to seven.\* Mr. Fisher, after having superintended the Theological Seminary for a period of fifteen years, had been obliged, through the increasing infirmities of age, to resign his professorial charge, and was succeeded in it by Mr. John Swanston, minister at Kinross. Mr. Swanston did not long enjoy the honours of the responsible situation which he had been called upon, by the suffrages of his brethren, to fill. He was appointed to it on the 18th of May, 1764, and he was unexpectedly removed from the scene of his labours on the 12th of June, 1767. Having gone to assist at the celebration of the Lord's Supper at Perth, he was attacked, on the evening of the communion Sabbath, by a severe inflammatory complaint, which made such rapid progress, that he expired in that city on the following Friday. Mr. John Brown, minister at Haddington, succeeded Mr. Swanston as Professor of Divinity. At the request of the synod, he took the charge of the students the year that Mr. Swanston died; but he was

\* This statement refers to the year 1770. No new presbytery had as yet been formed in Scotland since the breach. The three Scottish presbyteries were—Edinburgh, Glasgow, and Dunfermline. These presbyteries comprehended all the congregations connected with the Associate synod in Scotland and England. In Ireland, in addition to the presbytery of Down, already noticed, a new one had been formed, viz. the presbytery of Monaghan, which was erected in August 1764, and consisted, at its formation, of the following members:—Messrs. Hugh M'Gill, John M'Auley, John Beattie, and John Craig.

not formally elected Professor till the following year.\* Soon after the appointment of Mr. Brown to the Professorship, the synod made an enactment (in accordance with a former deed of the Associate Presbytery) concerning the admission of students to the Divinity Hall; declaring, that none should be admitted to the study of divinity, without proper testimonials from their respective sessions, approved of by the presbyteries; and that all candidates for admission to the Theological Seminary should be carefully examined by the presbyteries, not only on the different branches of literature, but also on the distinguishing principles of the gospel, and concerning their attachment to that particular scheme of doctrine, order of worship, and scheme of discipline and government laid down from scripture in the Confession of Faith, Larger and Shorter Catechisms, and Presbyterian Form of Church Government. The students, feeling the want of a theological library to assist them in their studies, presented a petition to the synod, craving that they would endeavour to raise a fund for this purpose. The synod highly approved of the object, and they issued a recommendation to all the ministers and elders under their inspection, to exert themselves in procuring, by private subscription or otherwise, the necessary supplies.

In August, 1770, the synod issued a pastoral address to the congregations under their charge, entitled, "A Warning against the prevalence of sinful looseness in principle and practice." This address is distinguished for the plain, faithful, and affectionate style in which it is written, and for the truly Christian spirit which it breathes. In it the synod exhort the people under their inspection to make the word of God the only rule of their practice, in every branch of their social conduct. "Be not followers of men (they say) any farther than you can see their sentiments and measures authorized in the Holy Scriptures. Do not receive your principles upon trust, but search the scriptures, to see whether they are contained in them or not. Do not suffer yourselves to be misled by the reputations of men, ministers, or parties; but be ye followers of the saints, and united in your zealous attachment to your principles, upon a certain and powerful evidence of the truth." They further warn the people "against mistaken notions of Christian liberty, as if it consisted in a person doing whatever seems right in his own eyes, without consulting the comfort and edification of his brethren. No society (they add) could possibly exist, if all mankind acted upon this loose principle, which makes void the law of God, and contradicts the very light of nature. Condescension, forbearance, and

\* May 5, 1768.

long-suffering, are branches of the Christian temper indispensably required in every church member; and they necessarily imply a self-denying regard to the opinions and conduct of others, in many instances of daily experience in the ways of religion." They also give a caution to their people "against indulging a bitter, censorious, uncharitable temper of mind against such as have not precisely the same views of the faith and order of the gospel with themselves." This caution they enforce by the following excellent remarks, which are well deserving the attention of professing Christians at all times:—"Emulation, wrath, strife, and seditions, manifestly are the works of the flesh, and they are an open disgrace to the cause of Christianity, which neither requires nor admits such dishonourable means of promoting it. It is good to be zealously affected always in this excellent cause, and to contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints; but to confine their charity to a party, is so far from being a Christian temper, that it manifests some of the worst dispositions in all that are guilty of it, and has, in every age, been the foundation of the greatest excesses. Uncharitable judgments, and evil surmisings, arrogate divine prerogatives, are a constant act of injustice to our neighbours, and a plain violation of the golden rule of doing to others as we would be done unto. They commonly arise from pride, ignorance, and selfishness; and they furnish an occasion of blasphemy and reproach against the ways of religion they are employed to promote. Besides, it is evident that such dispositions blind the mind, and pervert the judgment; and that those who are abandoned to them, with equal eagerness seek occasions of blaming others, and of justifying themselves. Prejudices of this sort exclude conviction, and have a dangerous tendency to render mankind slaves to the most unworthy and pernicious passions."\*

An address framed in such a Christian spirit, and circulated extensively throughout the association, could not fail to produce, upon both ministers and people, a beneficial effect. It was fitted to produce, on the one hand, a more decided attachment to those principles which, as Seceders, they professed to hold; and it was calculated, on the other, to soften the asperities of party spirit, and to lead them to cherish a feeling of Christian forbearance toward other denominations, whose sentiments might differ from their own.

Hitherto, owing to the scarcity of preachers, and the rapid increase of the congregations, the synod had been under the necessity of rendering the term of theological study as brief

\* Warning, &c. Pp. 6—8.

as possible; so that it was usual to license their young men, after they had been engaged in the study of divinity for four years; but, by an act passed on the 4th of May, 1774, it was rendered imperative on all candidates for the ministry to attend, in ordinary cases, the divinity hall for five sessions, and the Professor was prohibited from receiving any certificates of admission, except such as were given by the presbyteries.

As one of the objects of this narrative is to preserve a record, not only of the public transactions in which the Secession Church has been engaged, but also of her judicial proceedings, for the benefit of those who are in the pale of her communion, that they may know what those decisions are which she has given on questions of importance, that have from time to time been discussed in her judicatories,—I shall here give an account of proceedings of the Associate synod, in reference to two of their members, who, after demitting the pastoral charge of their congregations, insisted on being permitted to occupy a seat in the church courts.

Mr. John M'Cara, minister at Burntshields, being accused by his people of neglecting the duties of his office, and of conduct inconsistent with the dignity of the ministerial character, the synod found the charges preferred against him so far substantiated, that they administered to him a rebuke. Mr. M'Cara did not acquiesce in the justice of the sentence; and as the harmony between him and his people was interrupted, he offered the demission of his charge, which was accepted. At next meeting of synod, the question was proposed, Whether Mr. M'Cara ought to have a seat in the court? After some discussion, a committee, consisting of Messrs. James Fisher, John Smith, John Brown, and John Pattison, was appointed to prepare an overture on the subject.

The report of this committee was to the following effect: —“ That as it was necessary to maintain the parity of the number of ministers and elders in this court; that as far as they find, it has been the uniform practice of the Church of Scotland for ministers who voluntarily demitted their charges, to cease sitting as members of the ecclesiastical courts they formerly ruled in; and that as elders who remove to another congregation have no seat in the session thereof, till they be called to the exercise of their office by that congregation, they were unanimously of opinion, that Mr. M'Cara should be dropped from the roll of this court, as at present he, by virtue of his late demission, has the charge of no particular congregation.” After the report was given in, it was moved, that the synod should delay coming to a determination upon this question; but it carried, in opposition to this motion, that they should proceed to an immediate decision. The question

was then put, "Adopt the overture of the committee, or not?" when it carried, by a large majority, to Adopt; and the synod accordingly declared, that Mr. M'Cara ought not to sit and judge in any of the ecclesiastical judicatories.

The same year that this decision was pronounced (1768), Mr. David Horn, minister at Cambusnethan, presented the demission of his charge, in opposition to the wishes of his congregation. The Glasgow presbytery, on whose table the demission was laid, refused to accept of it, as Mr. Horn was still able to discharge the duties of his office; and his people, so far from being anxious for his removal, petitioned that they might enjoy the benefit of his labours. Mr. Horn protested, and appealed to the supreme court; and the synod, after hearing parties, agreed that the pastoral relation between Mr. Horn and his congregation should be dissolved. In consequence of this decision, Mr. Horn's name was dropped from the synod roll, by virtue of the act already mentioned. Mr. Horn was much dissatisfied with the synod's refusing to allow him to occupy his seat amongst them, as a member of court. He craved, at next meeting, to have his opinion marked in the following terms:—"1. He cannot see how a minister can be continued in full power and liberty to preach, and dispense gospel ordinances, and yet be denied the liberty and freedom of the other branch of his ministerial office, viz. the actual exercise of government and discipline. He is of opinion, that both keys were committed by the glorious Head to the apostles, and by consequence to their ordinary successors in office, and cannot be taken from them, but upon the account of their misconduct. 2. He cannot see from the acts and constitutions of this church, that any minister demitting his charge on account of necessity, as was his case, is to be deprived of his seat in judicatories; and so cannot but look on his being denied a seat in this court, to be, at least interpretatively, a censure upon him, as he is hereby denuded of a privilege to which he conceives he has a right, by virtue of his office. 3. He is at a loss to apprehend the justness of said act of synod (May 1768), in regard he has not seen it supported by any one text of Scripture, or any just and necessary consequence derived therefrom, or from any universal or approved practice, or acts and constitutions of this church, specified in the said act; and he craves further to be at liberty to add, in time coming, whatever other scruples and difficulties he may have with respect to said act."

Mr. Horn continued to besiege the synod with petitions and remonstrances on this subject, until, on the 5th of May, 1773, they reviewed and confirmed their former deed, declaring it to be improper for ministers who have demitted their charges to

have a seat in the church courts. So far from being satisfied with this second decision, Mr. Horn made his appearance at the bar of the synod, in the month of August following, and remonstrated at great length on the injustice that had been done to him, in removing his name from the roll. After being fully heard in his own cause, a long discussion ensued, which terminated in the following vote being stated:—“Affirm the former deeds of this court, in May 1768 and 1773, relative to ministers not sitting in synod after demission of their charges; or, Reverse them?” It carried, by a great majority, “Affirm.” Against this decision Mr. Horn protested; and Mr. George Coventry, minister at Stitchell, adhered to his protest.

Long and elaborately-written papers, entitled, “Reasons of Protest,” were afterwards given in by both of these brethren, and were entered upon the synod’s record. “Answers” to these reasons were prepared by a committee of synod, consisting of Messrs. John Pattison, John Belfrage, Alexander Shanks, and James Scott. This document, which was also inserted in the synod’s record, is drawn up with great learning and ingenuity, and contains a masterly vindication of the synod’s decision. The following extracts, taken from the introductory part of this paper, are deserving of attention, because they not merely show what were the general principles on which the synod proceeded, in giving the decision complained of, but also contain a correct and scriptural view of the constitution of presbyterian courts, and of the power of their members to exercise discipline in these courts. This portion of the paper consists of a series of propositions, which constitute the ground-work of the subsequent “Answers.”

“1. None have any right to a seat for rule in church judicatories but elders, whose office is to rule and govern the flock of God, over which the Holy Ghost hath made them overseers. This cardinal principle of the presbyterian constitution is clearly founded in the word of God,—1 Cor. xii. 28; 1 Tim. v. 17; 1 Pet. v. 1—3; Rom. xii. 7, 8.

“2. A congregational session, consisting of teaching and ruling elders, in a particular congregation, is the radical judicatory in the Christian church.

“3. Superior judicatories are composed only of such members as have a regular seat and judicial powers in the congregational sessions, which are immediately subordinate to them. Upon this principle, a classical presbytery is defined to be a judicatory which represents all the congregational sessions in a certain district; and a synod is a court which represents all the classical presbyteries in a much larger extent of country. Every session that is completely organized,

is therefore represented in a presbytery, synod, or assembly ; and none but the constitutional members of sessional judicatories can sit in these superior courts, as representatives of the church of Christ, and invested with judicial authority. Where congregations are not provided with a fixed pastor, the exercise of discipline in them is connected with the appointments of their respective presbyteries, and their sessions are represented, but do not sit by actual delegation, in the superior judicatories.

“ 4. All church-officers are authorized to act as immediately the servants of Christ, who hath appointed them to their several offices in his church ; 1 Cor. xii. 28, Ephes. iv. 8—12 ; and the extent of their sphere must be estimated from the nature of their office, and from their relation to some particular church ; Acts xx. 17—28, compared with Rev. ii. 1—6. According to this principle, ministers and ruling elders, in a constituted church, have no power to exceed the limits of their established congregational relation, in any act or matter relating to the exercise of discipline, except in virtue of the authority of a higher judicatory, to which they are in a regular subordination ; 2 Cor. x. 12—16.

“ 5. Presbyterian courts are officially the elected representatives of the flock, over which the Holy Ghost hath made them overseers. This principle is contended for by all the presbyterian writers, in opposition to the lordly usurpations of prelacy on the one hand, and independent anarchy on the other. The sentiment itself has a clear foundation in Matthew xviii. 17, Rev. 2d and 3d chapters, where the angels of the seven churches are addressed as the representatives of the churches ; Rev. i. 11.

“ 6. Ruling elders and ministers stand precisely on one footing, as to every thing that relates either to the power of elders, or the exercise of that power ; 1 Tim. v. 17. Every attempt to distinguish the nature, and grounds, and extent of their ruling powers, is an unhallowed effort to undermine the presbyterian constitution.

“ 7. Ministers and elders, demitting the exercise of their office in particular congregations, demit the exercise of their eldership and right to the exercise of discipline respectively. It will surely be allowed, that it is impossible they can both demit and retain, at the same time, the exercise of judicial powers in their respective congregations ; and it is an affront to common sense to suppose, that they can acquire a right to exercise the key of discipline in sessional or presbyterial courts, whereof they had never been members, merely by demitting their official ministrations in a particular congregation, where they had been regularly called to rule and govern the flock of

Christ. The effect of a demission, when accepted by the proper court, is, that it entirely dissolves the line of connexion between the person who demits, and the congregation where he had an oversight, without establishing a relation between him and any other. A minister or elder is only entitled to sit in judgment, and exercise discipline, upon the footing of his official relation to some particular congregation; and, through the medium of that relation, he becomes a member of superior courts of judicature. The truth of this principle is demonstrated—*First*, From all those passages of Scripture which assert the immediate relation of elders to particular churches and congregations; Acts xx. 17; Phil. i. 1; Titus i. 5; Rev. i. 11, 20. In the last of these passages, the apostle is commanded to write severally to the seven churches which are in Asia; and he fulfilled his commission by writing to the respective angels of these churches. These angels are church-officers, united in a presbyterian connexion. What was written to them, was written to the churches they were severally related to; and therefore these angels were both the elders and the representatives of the several churches. *Secondly*, From all the arguments employed by presbyterians to combat the arrogance of diocesan bishops, who assume a power of discipline where they have no pastoral connexion, in direct contradiction to Acts xx. 17, 28. *Thirdly*, From all the topics that establish the right of the Christian people to elect, and to be governed by their own elected, pastors and elders; Acts xiv. 23. *Fourthly*, From the nature and necessity of the service which is to be performed at the admission of a minister or elder, who had been formerly ordained to the exercise of his office in any congregation, where he had no relation before. His admission is a judicial deed (Acts xiii. 1—3), and the Lord Jesus calls him, by the steps connected with that deed, to be a governor in that part of his church. The inference is plain and undeniable, that without such admission, though a minister, or elder before, he could not regularly assume the exercise of his ministry or eldership in that or any other particular congregation. *Fifthly*, From the absurd consequences that would follow upon the prelatic principle of such as deny this doctrine. If a minister of unimpeachable reputation, demitting his office with the approbation of the proper courts, still retains all the power of an elder, and a right to the full exercise of all these powers, it cannot be merely a matter of prudence,—it must be with him a point of indispensable duty to employ all his powers as an elder, for promoting the design of Christ in conferring them. But where shall he employ them? In what session? In what presbytery? Over whom has the Holy Ghost made him an overseer? Ministers in a

particular charge must confine their pretensions to a limited sphere,—to one session in ordinary, and to one presbytery, &c. But a minister who hath no stated relation to a particular charge, might, upon the extravagant principle, which the synod abhors, become not only a diocesan overseer, but an universal ruler, or at least an indefinite elder and governor of the visible church. If, to all this unconstitutional claim of ruling power, be joined a warm zeal for opportunities to exercise it, and favourable circumstances equal to that zeal, a minister who has no pastoral labour to attend to in a congregation, may soon find opportunities and pretences enough to intrude his labours where they are not wanted, and to gratify his ambition at the expense of the order and peace of the church. From the whole, it appears that a minister, demitting his ministry in a particular congregation, demits at the same time his eldership, or his official ruling powers.

“8. Whatever acts of sessional jurisdiction are regularly performed by a minister out of his own congregation, must therefore be either expressly or indirectly authorized by a competent superior judicatory ; Acts xv. 22, 23.”

These were the principles on which the Associate synod vindicated the decision which they had given, when they declared, by a formal deed, that no minister who had demitted the charge of his congregation, ought to sit and judge in any church court. After stating these principles in the introductory part of their paper, they proceed to make an application of them, by giving specific answers to the reasons of protest advanced by the two brethren who complained of their decision. This question, after having undergone long and somewhat keen discussion, at several meetings of synod, was now finally set at rest.

Soon after these transactions, the Secession church was deprived of another of its ornaments, by the removal of Mr. James Fisher from the scene of his earthly labours. He died at Glasgow, on the 28th of September, 1775, in the 79th year of his age. Had he lived a few months longer, he would have completed the fiftieth year of his ministry. He was ordained minister of the parish of Kinclaven, at the beginning of the year 1726, and he was removed from that charge to the Associate congregation of Shuttle Street, Glasgow, in the month of October 1741.\* The preceding pages of this narrative attest the active part which he took in those transactions that gave birth to the Secession. As one of the four brethren with whom the Secession church originated, he de-

\* Fraser's Life of the Rev. E. Erskine, p. 496.

serves to have honourable mention made of him in this record. His name will go down to posterity, associated with the names of those good men who nobly exerted themselves to stem the torrent of corruption; and who, when religion was reduced to a low ebb in this northern part of the island, were the honoured instruments, in the hand of Providence, of effecting a considerable revival. Like those venerable men with whom he was associated, he showed how much he had at heart his Master's cause, by being unwearied in his labours, both in public and in private, to promote its success. After the formation of the Associate Presbytery at Gairney Bridge, he officiated for several years as clerk. When Mr. Ebenezer Erskine was obliged to resign the theological professorship, on account of the infirmities of age, we have seen that Mr. Fisher was unanimously called upon by his brethren to occupy that responsible situation; and the arduous duties connected with it he discharged with great fidelity and success, so long as his strength would permit. The excellent catechism, to which he contributed so largely, and which bears his name, shows how clear and extensive his knowledge was of the various topics of divinity. He was held in high estimation as a preacher. His pulpit talents were such, that a person who was competent to judge, declared concerning him, that "neither as to sentiment, composition, nor delivery, had he ever heard his superior."\* He was regular in his attendance upon the church courts, and took an active part in their deliberations. During a long ministerial course, his name is found connected with all the public transactions in which the Secession were engaged. A few years before he died, Mr. George Henderson was ordained as his colleague and successor in the ministerial office. Having outlived, for a considerable period, the other founders of the Secession, and having witnessed the rapid increase of its congregations, and the great amount of good which it had already accomplished among his countrymen, it must have been pleasing to him, in advanced age, to contemplate these manifest tokens of the divine approbation bestowed upon a cause which he had espoused at an early period of his ministry, and which he had laboured for nearly half a century to promote. He was gathered to his fathers in peace; and, as being one of the excellent of the earth, his memory is blessed.

Hitherto no kind of provision had been made by the synod for the widows and fatherless children of such of their brethren as might be removed by death. As the livings in the Secession church have never at any time been such as to

\* Fraser's Life of the Rev. E. Erskine, p. 498.

tempt the ambition of worldly-minded men ; and as, at that period, the stipends given to the ministers were smaller than they are even at present, so, when a minister died, without leaving any private patrimony to his wife and family, their circumstances, in a worldly point of view, were far from being comfortable. The only provision made for a minister's family, by the laws of the church, was that, after the decease of the minister, the congregation where he had laboured, was required to pay the family a half year's stipend. This benevolent regulation had obtained in the national church ; and the Secession endeavoured to act upon it, so far as circumstances would permit. In cases where a congregation refused to pay the *annat* (for so this provision was termed), the synod interposed their authority, for the purpose of making the congregation fulfil the obligation which they owed to their deceased minister's family. A case of this kind was referred to them, for decision, by the Edinburgh presbytery, in September, 1775. The case was that of West Linton congregation, who, after the death of their minister, refused to pay a half year's stipend to his widow. Commissioners from that congregation were heard at the bar of the synod, in support of their refusal. The synod, after mature deliberation, found " that the congregation of Linton, in point of humanity and equity, and according to the law of the nation, the wonted custom of the Church of Scotland, and the common practice of the Secession, ought to pay to their pastor's widow the *annat*, or half year's stipend, after his decease."

As the payment of the *annat* could not always be depended on, especially where the congregations were poor, and as such a provision could afford only a short-lived supply, a proposal was made, at the meeting of synod now mentioned, to form a benevolent fund for giving assistance to the widows and fatherless children of deceased ministers, who had been connected with this branch of the Secession. The draught of a scheme was laid before the synod, the principle of which was approved of, and a committee was appointed to consider it more fully, and to prepare a memorial on the subject, a copy of which was to be sent to all the sessions, in order to obtain their co-operation. After this scheme had been considered at several meetings, it was finally adopted by the synod, on the 8th of May, 1777. Thirty-nine ministers enrolled themselves as members of the fund ; and, to render the fund more productive, a collection was appointed to be made annually, for three successive years, in all the congregations throughout Britain, that were under the inspection of the synod. A short address was also prepared, and ordered to be read from every pulpit, on the day when the intimation for said collection was made.

In the end of the year 1778, the synod republished all the official documents that were acknowledged by this branch of the Secession, under the title of "Re-exhibition of the Testimony; or, A connected view of those principles upon which a Secession from the judicatories of the Church of Scotland was stated, by several ministers of the gospel in 1733; and, since that time, maintained by the Associate synod."\* Previous to this republication, they made a variety of corrections in the Judicial Act and Testimony, especially in the historical portion of it; and they added an appendix to it, in which they extended the testimony-bearing to some public transactions which had taken place since the original Testimony was published. They prefixed to the whole a preface, in which they vindicated the practice of publishing creeds and confessions, and pointed out the subordinate place which these are intended to hold. The following passage is extracted, to show what were the views which they entertained upon this point:—

"While we refuse that those creeds and confessions are, in any respect, the foundation of our faith, or the rule of what we are to believe towards God, we contend that they are founded on the divine word; that they are an excellent form of sound words, which we are commanded to hold fast; that they are a comprehensive exhibition of *the analogy of faith*, according to which we are to prophesy; and that they are a connected representation of the first principles of the doctrines of Christ. Viewed in this point of light, it will be difficult to show that they are either improper or absurd; and, notwithstanding the mean and futile reflections which have, with an unjustifiable degree of ignorance and levity, been liberally thrown upon them by some professed ministers in the Church of Scotland, not to mention those in the Church of England, they are of the greatest utility in the Christian world; and, even in this degenerate age, there are, it is to be hoped, not a few who hold them in deserved esteem. Possessed of this temper and discernment, judicious Christians will be apt, under the clearest conviction, to consider them as collections

\* The Re-exhibition contains in it the following documents:—1. The First Testimony; or, Reasons by the four brethren for their protestation entered before the commission of the General Assembly, November 1773; 2. Act, Declaration, and Testimony (ordinarily termed the Judicial Testimony) of the Associate presbytery; 3. The libel put into the hands of the seceding ministers by the General Assembly, with their answers; 4. Act of declinature by the Associate presbytery; 5. Act of Assembly, 1732, condemning the declinature, with observations thereon, by the Associate presbytery; 6. Reasons by the four brethren, why they have not acceded to the judicatories of the Established Church; 7. Act of the Associate synod, October 1747, declaring the nullity of the synod that first met in Mr. Gib's house, April 10; 8. Act of the Associate synod, met at Stirling, November 1753, containing a narrative of the rise, progress, and grounds of their secession.

of divine truth, in their proper connection; as tests of orthodoxy, or subordinate criteria, absolutely necessary for distinguishing truth from error, and for detecting the erroneous in their unmanly subterfuges, as avowed standing testimonies for truth, in opposition to error, and as authoritative representations, in an agreeableness to the word of God, of the principles and terms of Christian communion, in particular churches, intended to direct their members how to hold comfortable and consistent fellowship with one another in the Lord. Our Westminster Confession of Faith, Larger and Shorter Catechisms, the Form of Presbyterian Church Government and Discipline, with the Directory for Worship, are perhaps the most excellent ecclesiastical standards in the Christian world. To renounce, therefore, any of those important truths exhibited in these standards, must involve this nation in proportional guilt; and the more so, as we are engaged in our covenants, and other vows, to maintain and defend them against all opposition.”\*

In the concluding part of the Re-exhibition, the synod repel the charge that was sometimes brought against Seceders by the adherents of the Establishment, that they were schismatics. They declare, in the language of their forefathers, that their continuing in a state of separation from the National church, was not because they objected to her constitution, or because they held opinions with regard to doctrine, worship, discipline, and government, different from those which she maintained in her subordinate standards, but because they objected to the system of mal-administration which that church was pursuing, and which they considered to be no less opposed to the word of God than it was inconsistent with the principles of her constitution. “Their secession (they say) is not a schism in the church, for they never seceded from the principles and constitution professed and established at the Reformation and Revolution; but, upon every occasion, declare their steadfast adherence to these, in opposition to the prevailing party who have receded from them.”†

They further declare, that corrupt as the National church was, at the commencement of the Secession in 1733, her character since that period had become greatly deteriorated, and the original grounds of the Secession were considerably extended, so that the prospect of a reunion was removed to a greater distance than ever. The following is the account which they give of the state of matters in the Establishment, at the close of the year 1778:—“Doctrines that are no less derogatory to the honour, glory, and Godhead of the Son of

\* Preface to the Re exhibition, pp. 11, 12.

† Re-exhibition, p. 309.

God, than dangerous to the souls of men, are openly preached and printed, in some places ; the exercise of discipline is, by many, either omitted, or accommodated to the temper of the times ; the oppressive and unscriptural law of patronage is executed with an inflexible rigour, in spite of repeated remonstrances from reclaiming congregations ; the seals of the covenant are prostituted by a promiscuous admission of those who are, by the revealed will of Christ, totally unqualified to receive them, and are therefore inadmissible by his ministers ; a disregard, if not a contempt of strictness in a profession or practice of religion, is become almost universal. These are melancholy truths, the knowledge of which is within the reach of the meanest individual ; and, upon supposition that the secession was groundless, at the period in which it commenced, they afford the most undeniable grounds for it in the present age. And notwithstanding the current language of the times, it is not easy to conceive how the purity and peace of conscience are consistent with submission to those ecclesiastical decisions which, in their very nature, deprive it of an opportunity to discharge its duty by an open and faithful testimony against them. It is submitted to the impartial world, if there be another method by which the conscience, properly informed, and regulated by the divine law, can exonerate itself so fully and consistently, in bearing testimony against the above and other evils, as in the state of secession from the present judicatories of the church."\*

The Associate synod participated in the alarm which was so general over the country at this period, with regard to the prevalence of popery. This alarm was occasioned by the repeal of some of those penal enactments against the professors of the popish religion, which had so long disgraced the statute book of the British empire. During the reign of William the Third, laws were enacted, which subjected to perpetual imprisonment every popish priest who exercised any part of his functions within the kingdom, and which subjected to the same punishment every person of the popish religion who kept a school, or took upon himself the education, government, or boarding of youth. All Roman Catholics were declared, by the same enactments, incapable of taking an estate by purchase, or of receiving it by inheritance from their parents or others, unless they took oaths, and subscribed declarations, which were inconsistent with the religion which they professed. If a protestant proprietor became a papist, he forfeited his estate ; and if a protestant servant embraced popery, he was to be punished, and to be dismissed from his

\* Re-exhibition, p. 310.

service. Some of these statutes were regarded as so severe, that scarcely an instance occurred of their being carried into effect. Except for the purpose of producing alarm in the minds of those who were liable to be affected by them, they remained, to all other intents and purposes, a dead letter upon the statute-book.

A bill was introduced into Parliament, by Sir George Saville, in 1778, by which these intolerant statutes were repealed, in so far as the Roman Catholics of England were concerned; and a notice was at the same time given by the Lord Advocate, that he intended to bring in a similar bill for the relief of his Catholic countrymen in Scotland. These movements in favour of the Roman Catholics produced a wide-spread feeling of alarm among the inhabitants of this northern part of the island. The minds of men, both in town and country, were filled with the most gloomy forebodings of future evil. In the repeal of these obnoxious statutes, they saw nothing but the overthrow of the protestant religion, and the establishment of the Catholic faith, with all its terrors. Both churchmen and dissenters united in the cry of No popery, to prevent the repeal. A motion on this subject was brought forward in the General Assembly, by Dr. Gillies, one of the ministers of Glasgow, who moved, "That, as a bill for the relief of Roman Catholics in England, has been lately brought into Parliament, and is already passed the House of Commons, and as the next session of Parliament may perhaps be over before another General Assembly; that this Assembly should give particular instructions to their Commission, that, at their stated meetings, they should be very watchful over the interests of the protestant religion, in this part of the United Kingdoms; and that they be very attentive when any proposal shall be made to extend the bill to Scotland; and if any thing occur to make an extraordinary meeting of the Commission necessary, this Assembly (in regard their moderator lives at a great distance from Edinburgh), empower and ordain their principal clerk, upon a requisition made by the presbytery of Edinburgh, or by any ten ministers of this church, to call an extraordinary meeting of the Commission, by advertisements in the newspapers; and the Assembly appoint all their members to acquaint their constituents with the above resolution, that so they may send proper information concerning this matter to the meetings of the Commission." This motion gave rise to a long debate; but, as it was opposed by Principal Robertson, whose influence at that period was all powerful in the Assembly, it was rejected by a large majority. The principal denied that the protestant religion was in any danger from the bill in ques-

tion. He characterized the penal laws against the papists, as sanguinary and cruel, and declared that nothing but the time in which they were passed could be pled in their justification.\*

The synods connected with the Establishment took up the business. Strong resolutions condemnatory of the bill were adopted. The synod of Glasgow appointed a fast to be observed, and "recommended the study of the popish controversy to all the ministers within the province." The synod of Dumfries "appointed their moderator to write a respectful letter to the Lord Advocate, and inform his Lordship of their sentiments, as to the danger of a toleration to the Roman Catholics in Scotland, and to request his friendly assistance to prevent a repeal of the Scotch acts of parliament against popery. They also recommended it to the clergy within their bounds to preach often on the popish controversy."† Meetings were held in all districts of the country; petitions to parliament were prepared; associations were formed for the protection of the "Protestant interest." In Edinburgh and Glasgow, the popular frenzy broke out into acts of violence, such as burning the houses, and destroying the property, of obnoxious individuals.

Notice has already been taken, in a preceding part of this narrative, of the testimony which the brethren belonging to the Antiburgher branch of the Secession emitted against the legal encouragement given to popery, at the present crisis. The brethren belonging to the Burgher synod joined in the general movement. They were alarmed at the proposal to repeal the above-mentioned statutes. They trembled lest, when the lash of the law was no longer held over the heads of the Roman Catholics, popery should come rushing in like a flood; and they considered it their duty to sound an alarm in the ears of the people. A committee was appointed by them to prepare "a judicious and well-supported warning against popery;" and a recommendation was given to all ministers under their inspection, "carefully to instruct and establish their hearers in the truths of the gospel, in opposition to the abominations of popery." This 'Warning' was published; and one or two extracts from it will show how gloomy were the apprehensions which disturbed the minds of the brethren of the Associate synod at this period. "Some of the agents of the man of sin, expelled his own territories, for seditious practices, by the kings who have given him their power, have hid themselves in our protestant islands; and, being possessed of all that subtilty and craftiness which enable the deceiver to

\* Scots Magazine, vol. xl. p. 269

† Ibid. p. 566.

impose upon the ignorant and the weak, industriously watch every opportunity of creeping into houses, and leading captive silly women, laden with sins, led away with divers lusts, ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth. Your weakness on this side is not imaginary, your danger is real and great." "At this alarming juncture of time, when it is generally allowed that popery is advancing with large strides into the nation, and numerous converts are brought into the communion of the Church of Rome, we durst not be silent; but, animated with zeal for sound doctrine, and simplicity of worship, discipline, and manners, we judged ourselves peculiarly called upon, as ministers of the gospel, to make the most vigorous opposition in our power, to the encroaching evil, by attempting a seasonable and close application of scripture truths, for manifesting to the judgment the true state and condition of the Roman Catholic church, which glories in her shame, in teaching for doctrines the commandments of men." "It is no secret, that there is a great number of emissaries of the Church of Rome, disguised in Scotland; and, should they be allowed, supported, and countenanced in the public exercise of their religion, by a legal toleration among us, who can tell what harvest a clergy so numerous, so subtile, and so well-furnished with arguments to work on vulgar, uneducated, and unprincipled minds, may be able to make in a country now, through the prevalence of infidelity, ignorance, luxury, and venality, so much despoiled of all religion, and feeling the want of it? And, when their numbers and power are increased, can we doubt but they will recover the spirit of their religion, and act accordingly?"\*

Sixty years have elapsed since these passages were penned and published by a committee of the Associate synod. The intolerant statutes against popery, the repeal of which was so much dreaded by these good men, have long been repealed; Roman Catholics have, for many years, been permitted to teach and preach in our towns and villages, without any let or hinderance; and yet the protestant faith remains as firm and sound as ever, in this northern part of the island. The experience of more than half a century has shown, that the fears, which were indulged on this subject, were imaginary. If conversions have occasionally been made to the Roman Catholic faith, from amongst the protestant population, these have been comparatively few in number, and they have been owing, in a great measure, to the peculiar circumstances in which the individuals have been placed. Alarmists of the

\* Warning against Popery, pp. 44, 60, 64.

present day, indeed, point to the thousands and tens of thousands of papists, that are to be found in Glasgow, and in some other of our large towns; and they repeat the statement, which has been repeated for at least a hundred years back, that our country is in imminent danger of being inundated with popery. But these thousands and tens of thousands are not converts from protestantism to catholicism. By far the greater part of them have been brought up in the popish faith; they have come from distant popish districts into the large towns, in quest of employment; and there is no more cause for alarm now, than there was when the synod published their "Warning." If the Roman Catholics are wandering in the mazes of error, let them be instructed in the knowledge of the truth; but let them not be oppressed nor persecuted in any way. Protestantism does not require the aid of penal enactments, to secure it against the encroachments of popery. It is perfectly able to maintain its own ground. It has made great advances since the period of the Reformation; and the fewer intolerant laws that are made, to assist it in its movements, the more rapid will be its progress, and the more complete its triumphs. The signs of the times indicate, that more enlightened views have begun to prevail upon this subject. The good leaven has found its way into the mass, and it will, in due time, leaven the whole lump.

In Ireland the Secession continued steadily to advance. Accessions were made from time to time, to the number of its congregations. Two presbyteries, in connection with the Associate synod, had already been formed in that island; and owing to the increased number of the congregations, it was deemed expedient, after a short interval, to erect a third presbytery, under the designation of "The Presbytery of Derry."\* Scarcely two years elapsed after the formation of this presbytery, when a petition was presented to the Supreme court in Scotland, by the brethren in Ireland, craving that they might be erected into a synod, for the purposes of government and discipline. This petition was favourably entertained by the Scottish brethren; and as it was of importance that a brotherly connection should subsist betwixt the synod in Scotland, and the one about to be erected in Ireland, the following were proposed as the terms on which this fraternal intercourse should be conducted:—1. A deputation of two members to be sent every year, alternately, from the one synod to the other. 2. The students of divinity, connected with both

\* This presbytery was formed on the first Tuesday of November 1777, and consisted, at its formation, of the following members:—viz. Mr. Joseph Kerr, Balligony; Mr. James Harper, Knocklonghran; Mr. John Bridge, Clananees; and Mr. Thomas Dickson, Tarmont.

synods, to be trained up under the same Theological Professor appointed by the synod in Scotland. 3. Those portions of the minutes of each synod, referring to matters of importance, to be transmitted from one synod to the other for brotherly review. 4. Should one synod intend to pass an act of general and lasting concern, it shall be remitted, in the form of an overture, to the other, for their friendly remarks, before it be finally adopted. 5. Both synods to meet in a General synod, once every seven years, or oftener if necessary, and every third time in Ireland: at this General synod nothing shall be transacted, but what is of general importance to both synods; and though it shall have power to review, and, on good grounds, reverse a deed of the subordinate synods, yet in no private cause shall the operation of the sentence of the particular synods be suspended by an appeal to the General synod. These terms were cordially acquiesced in by the brethren in Ireland; and the Irish synod was appointed to hold its first meeting at Monaghan, on the 20th of October, 1779, and the first general meeting of both synods was appointed to take place at Glasgow on the first Tuesday of May 1786. This latter meeting was held at the time appointed; but no mention is made in the synod record of any of the Irish brethren having attended; and notwithstanding the resolution, that was adopted on this subject, I am not aware that any general meeting of the two synods ever took place.

In the spring of 1782, Mr. John Thomson, minister at Kirkintilloch, was sent by the synod in Scotland to attend the meeting of the Irish synod, as a corresponding number; and the report which he brought back, concerning the reception that he met with, and the improved state of affairs among the Seceders in Ireland, was of a gratifying kind. The following extract from a letter, of which he was the bearer, from the Irish brethren to the synod in Scotland, will show in what respects their condition was improved:—"Brethren, it is our unspeakable mercy that we have the free exercise of our religion, without the fears of imprisonment, fines, and unjust impositions upon our consciences, to which even some of our body were exposed a few years ago in this isle. As the test act is repealed, the marriage of dissenters is valid in law, and the scriptural mode of swearing allowed to Seceders, except in criminal cases, and to qualify for offices under government; which mercies will aggravate our guilt if we be unfaithful."

This same year, a movement was made in some of the congregations belonging to the Burgher Section of the Secession, toward a union with their brethren of the Antiburgher synod. Several petitions to this effect were transmitted, through the

presbyteries of Edinburgh and Kelso,\* to the Associate synod, at their meeting in September 1782. The synod agreed to consider these petitions in a committee of the whole house; but no farther step was taken in this matter. The time for a union was not yet come.

An overture from the presbytery of Glasgow called the attention of the synod to some of the questions in the Formula, and proposed that certain alterations should be made, with a view to render the Formula more plain and uniform. The questions particularly referred to, were the second, third, fourth, and fifth; and the alterations proposed were not such as materially to affect the meaning, but consisted chiefly of abbreviations, by leaving out some of the phrases which had hitherto been in use. This overture was transmitted to the presbyteries and sessions for their consideration, and the synod finally gave it their sanction. As some of the presbyteries had not strictly adhered to the questions in the original Formula, but had altered them to a certain extent, and thereby produced a diversity of practice, the synod ordered a copy of the Formula (as now approved of by them), to be inserted in the minutes of every presbytery and session, to prevent all diversity for the future.

These changes that were adopted, in reference to the questions now mentioned, had not the slightest connection with any diversity of opinion about the power of the magistrate in matters of religion. The view of the synod upon this point may be ascertained from the course of procedure which they pursued, with regard to one of their probationers, very soon after the above amendments were adopted. In May 1784, Mr. David Hepburn sent a letter to the synod, stating that he had scruples concerning the doctrine taught in the Confession of Faith, about the power of the magistrate in matters of religion, and declining to receive farther appointments, as a preacher, from the synod. The synod agreed to withhold appointments from him, and enjoined the presbytery of Dunfermline (within whose bounds he was) to deal with him, "in order to reclaim him from his mistakes." What success the presbytery had in their attempts to remove Mr. Hepburn's scruples, I am unable to state; but as his name soon appeared again in the list of the synod's probationers, and as in the course of a short period he submitted to be ordained in the congregation of Newburgh, it may be presumed that he was so far reclaimed from his "mistakes" as to give satisfaction to the presbytery.

\* This presbytery held its first meeting, by appointment of the synod, at Jedburgh, on the 18th of June, 1782. Mr. George Coventry of Stitchell presided, as moderator, on the occasion.

That section of the Secession church, whose history I am now reviewing, had no philosophical class connected with their Theological Seminary, as their brethren of the Antiburgher synod had. They were, however, equally attentive to the literary improvement of the young men, who were training up under their inspection for the office of the holy ministry; and they were equally anxious that they should be distinguished for their soundness in the faith, and for every ministerial qualification. A variety of regulations were adopted by them, from time to time, designed to promote the respectability and efficiency of those whom they licensed to preach the gospel. In May 1786, the synod gave an injunction to all the presbyteries to make particular inquiry, whether the young men, who applied for admission to the Divinity Hall, had gone through a regular course of study at any of the universities. None were to be admitted to the study of divinity, who had not attended the literary and philosophical classes, at one of the Scottish colleges, for a period of at least three years. Presbyteries were further enjoined to inquire concerning the prudence, as well as the literature and piety, of the candidates for the ministry; and the young men were required to visit the ministers residing in their neighbourhood, to give them an opportunity of judging of their qualifications.

Soon after this, the synod gave their sanction to an overture, which was introduced by the Glasgow presbytery, and was designed to guard the Secession preachers against that affectation of philosophical refinement, which at this period prevailed extensively among the ministers of the Establishment, and rendered their discourses sapless and unprofitable. Those with whom the overture originated conceived that there was danger of the Secession students acquiring a fondness for a style of preaching, which was so much in vogue, and which, if adopted by them, would prove an effectual barrier in the way of their being useful among the people. The overture, which the synod sanctioned with the view of preventing such an evil, was to the following effect:—

“As it is a concern of great importance to the church of Christ, that the doctrines of the gospel be preserved in their purity, and transmitted in this form to succeeding generations, it is necessary that every proper mean be employed for securing this object, and for preventing the introduction of every thing that might affect it. This is a duty incumbent on all, and especially on those who have a ministerial commission, to teach and publish those doctrines to others, and to commit them to faithful men who shall be able to teach others also: And as not a little depends upon the mode of thinking on divine subjects, and the manner of expressing them, which are

at first adopted by candidates for the ministry, it is of essential moment, that every error in this stage of their preparations be timeously corrected, and that an evangelical train of thinking, and a scriptural simplicity of language should be warmly recommended. Therefore, the presbytery taking into their serious consideration how much the interests of religion are involved in these objects, and from apprehension of a growing fondness for false refinement and abstract reasoning in handling the truths of the gospel, among some of our entrants into the ministry, humbly solicit the interference of the reverend synod, and their united attention to an object of so great magnitude. When the presbytery suggest these things, they do not mean to condemn the honest ingenuity of the preacher and student of divinity in seeking to find out acceptable words upon every subject; but they cannot help being of opinion that their time and attention should be chiefly devoted to solid sentiment and sound evangelical connexions in illustrating divine truths, because they apprehend that the spiritual improvement of the hearers is intimately connected with these.

“In order, therefore, the more effectually to accomplish this end, they would humbly overture to the reverend synod, that they give particular instructions to the several presbyteries, not only to examine with care the young men who apply to them for admission to the Professor of Divinity, as to their knowledge of the languages and other branches of literature, but that they make inquiry into such other circumstances about them as are necessary to be known, in order to their being admitted with the prospect of future usefulness in the church; likewise that the committee appointed to converse with probationers should have it recommended to them to guard the preachers against this evil which is dreaded, and propose such antidotes as they think may be most successful; that the probationers be ordered to deliver discourses before the presbytery in whose bounds they are, that the presbytery may have an opportunity of judging of their manner and proficiency, and may correct and encourage them as they shall see cause; that our Professor of Divinity be made acquainted with the design of this overture, in order to add the greater weight to his theological instructions, and to encourage his watchfulness over the students in this important particular; and that it be recommended to every minister, who may have students of divinity under his pastoral charge, to concur in seconding these means, by directing them in their study of divinity, and recommending such books as are calculated to store their minds with useful knowledge.”

During the summer of 1787, Mr. Brown of Haddington died. His health had for some time been in an enfeebled

state; and at his own request a member of synod had been appointed, at the meeting in May of that year, to take charge of the students during the approaching session, as he found that his strength would not permit him to superintend their studies. The choice of the synod fell upon Mr. George Lawson, minister at Selkirk. His appointment at first was only for one season; but when the synod met in autumn, soon after Mr. Brown's death, Mr. Lawson was formally elected Professor of Divinity, and the Theological Seminary was removed from Haddington to Selkirk.

The character which Mr. Brown left behind him for piety, diligence, and theological knowledge, and fidelity in his Master's service, was highly honourable. The literary advantages, which he enjoyed in early life, were scanty; but there have been few individuals who, with such limited means of improvement, have risen to higher eminence in the church, both as a theologian and an author. The fame, which he has acquired by his useful practical writings, and especially by his Self-interpreting Bible, has been most extensive, and bids fair to be lasting. He is an encouraging example of what may be effected, by dint of industry and perseverance, in the acquisition of knowledge. The synod, on receiving intelligence of his death, paid a just tribute to his memory, by making honourable mention of him in their record, as a person "whose eminent piety, fervent zeal, extensive charity, and unwearied diligence in promoting the interests of religion, will be long remembered by this court, especially by those members of it who had the happiness of studying divinity under his inspection." They also agreed to insert in their minutes the following postscript, which was appended to a letter written by Mr. Brown a short while before his death, and which was addressed to the members of synod:—"As many of you have been my students, and most of you my younger in years, permit me to beseech you all to do all in your power to transmit Christ's truths as faithfully and diligently to posterity as possible. His truths and cause shall shine on earth, and especially in heaven for ever, be they now as low as they will in Britain."

At the time of Mr. Lawson's appointment to the professorship a proposition was submitted by the synod to the consideration of the presbyteries, whether it might not be expedient to fix the seat of the Theological Seminary permanently in Edinburgh, to release the Professor in all time coming from having the charge of a congregation, and to allow him for his maintenance such a salary, from the funds of the Association, as might enable him to devote the whole of his time to the training of the students, and to his own literary improvement. This scheme was found to be imprac-

licable ; and it was ultimately determined, that the Professor should continue to have a pastoral charge, as formerly, and that the very moderate sum of £30 should be allowed him annually, to defray the incidental expenses incurred by his professorship.

The heretical sentiments, published by Dr. M'Gill in his *Practical Essay upon the death of Jesus Christ*, have already been noticed in a former part of this volume.\* As the heresies of this individual were permitted to circulate for some time, without any notice being taken of them by the ecclesiastical judicatories of the Establishment, and as no adequate censure (even after notice was taken of them) was inflicted on the heretic himself, the Associate synod considered it their duty to call the attention of their congregations, and of the public in general, to sentiments that were so dishonouring to the Redeemer, and so dangerous to the souls of men. They appointed a committee to prepare an overture on this subject, with a special reference to the errors contained in Dr. M'Gill's Essay. The result of the committee's labours was presented to the synod on the 8th of May, 1788, in the form of a pamphlet, entitled, *A Warning against Socinianism*. The synod, after hearing the contents of it read over, and highly approving of the doctrine which it contained, authorized the publication of it by the committee, in the hope, "that, through the blessing of God, it would be useful for establishing Christians in the present truth, and for preserving them from being led away by the error of the wicked." In this pamphlet the committee reviewed the leading articles of the system of doctrine contained in the *Practical Essay*, and pointed out their opposition to the system of revealed truth, and their dangerous tendency. The publication of the *Warning*, and the circulation of it in the different districts of the country, could not fail to have a favourable influence in checking the progress of error, and in establishing the minds of men in the truth.

As the centenary of the Revolution, accomplished in November 1688, was at hand, the synod, after ascertaining the sentiments of the different presbyteries on the subject, agreed that the congregations under their charge should be required devoutly and gratefully to commemorate that memorable event. The 5th of November, 1788, was fixed upon for this purpose ; and a committee was appointed to prepare an address embodying in it the reasons for this commemoration. This address furnishes another proof, in addition to the many that have already been adduced, of the deep interest which the

\* See p. 360.

great mass of Seceders have ever taken in the liberties of their country, and of the loyal attachment which they have ever cherished toward that illustrious family, the members of which have now for a succession of generations swayed the sceptre of the British empire. The address is here inserted, as worthy of a place in this record:—

“The Associate synod, deeply impressed with the unmerited goodness of God to us as a nation, church, and individuals, judge it a duty to appoint a day of solemn thanksgiving for his abundant mercies. Recollecting, in particular, that on the 5th of November next a century will have elapsed since the memorable Revolution, in 1688, they are desirous to testify their gratitude to God for the very signal blessings, both of a civil and sacred kind, which that interesting period brought along with it. With grateful sensibility the synod call to remembrance, that then the nation was rescued from tyrannical exertions of power, proper bounds were set to the prerogatives of the crown, the liberties of the subject were established on a sure and permanent basis, the land was delivered from the dread, and secured against the re-establishment, of popery, a way paved for the illustrious House of Hanover to succeed in future times to the government of these realms, and a foundation laid for our empire to rise, under an indulgent providence, to its present pitch of happiness and glory. With emotions of gratitude no less strong and lively the synod remark the many national favours which have succeeded that glorious era; of which the continuance of the gospel, though in some places resisted and obscured; the delivering us from the repeated attempts of a Pretender to the British throne to disturb our peace and comfort, and overturn the valuable system which was then established; the preserving safe to us our religious liberties, notwithstanding of reiterated machinations against them; and the raising of able, zealous, and successful defenders of the distinguishing doctrines of Christianity, so often as they have been insidiously attacked, are not the least inconsiderable and important.

“For these reasons, the synod appoint and summon all under their inspection to observe the 5th of November next, as a day of solemn praise and thanksgiving to the Most High, and enjoin it upon them to offer to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ blessing, and glory, and honour, and thanksgiving for these and his manifold other mercies; and to present their supplications to the Governor among the nations, that he would bless and long preserve our Sovereign King George, our Queen, the Prince of Wales, and all the members of the royal family; that he would continue to us the possession of our liberties, both sacred and civil, and that he

would pour out upon us his Holy Spirit from on high, to determine and enable us to make a due improvement of these privileges, to contend for them when encroached upon, and to hand them down inviolate to our posterity."

During the meeting of the synod in September 1788, a communication was received by them, that some members of the Reformed Presbytery were desirous to hold a conference with any deputation the synod might appoint, with a view to unite in church fellowship. The following persons were appointed a committee to meet with the brethren of the Reformed Presbytery, viz. Messrs. John Belfrage, William Fletcher, Alexander Shanks, Michael Gilfillan, James Husband, James Peddie, James Hall, James Henry, Robert Burns, and Thomas Edmond. The result of the conference was unsatisfactory. After a statement had been made by the committee, of a conversation which they had held with the brethren of the Reformed Presbytery on various subjects, it was found, that there was such a difference of opinion between the members of the synod and the members of the Presbytery, that they "could not walk together in church fellowship to the edification and comfort of one another;" and it was agreed that a declaration to this effect should be made, in name of the synod, to the Reformed brethren. In the following year, an overture was presented to the synod, in which it was proposed that it should be rendered imperative on every session, who had no deacons, to adopt measures for supplying this defect. The overture was allowed to lie on the table; but no decision was given on the subject. Soon after this, another overture was introduced, proposing that elders and deacons should be ordained by the laying on of hands. This overture was remitted to the consideration of sessions; and, as only two sessions expressed themselves in favour of the proposed change, it was rejected. A third overture was introduced at the same time with the preceding one, proposing an enlargement of the psalmody. The consideration of this was delayed till a subsequent meeting.

But no measure has been adopted by the synod, which has been more extensively useful in its operation, or which has contributed more to the general prosperity of the Association, than one to which, after mature deliberation, they gave their sanction in 1791. This was the institution of a fund for assisting weak congregations, for giving support to aged and infirm ministers, for defraying the expenses connected with the support of the Theological Seminary, and for other pious and charitable purposes. It was proposed that the fund should be supported by annual congregational collections, and by voluntary contributions from individual members of the church. The

management of it was placed under the superintendence of a committee, annually appointed by the synod at their meeting in May, and consisting of an equal number of ministers and elders; it being specially provided, that at least one minister and one elder from each presbytery should be members of committee; and presbyteries were allowed to nominate each a minister and elder to the synod, with a view to their being appointed members of the committee of management. It was declared to be a fundamental principle of the fund, that no congregation should receive any assistance from it, that were judged able to give to their minister a stipend of fifty pounds annually, with a house valued at five pounds of rent; and all congregations were declared to be in this predicament, whose examination roll consisted of more than three hundred persons upwards of eighteen years of age. The highest sum permitted to be given, by way of donation, to any one congregation, at a single grant, was ten pounds. Sums of twenty pounds or upwards might be given by way of loan, either with or without interest, as the circumstances of the case required.\* During the long period that this fund has been in existence, many thousands of pounds have been expended from it; and though the donations granted have usually been small, yet by means of the aid thus afforded, infant congregations have been cherished until they attained to a state of maturity; and long established congregations, when reduced in their circumstances, have, by the same assistance, been enabled to maintain a gospel ministry in situations where, humanly speaking, the gospel would not otherwise have been enjoyed. The donations allowed for the support of aged ministers were more liberal than those which were granted to congregations. Many pious and devoted servants of Christ have thus been enabled to spend the evening of their days in comparative comfort, when, on account of the infirmities of age, they have been obliged to retire from the scene of active labour; and when their congregations, having to maintain another minister, could not afford to give the aged pastor his accustomed stipend. There are few congregations, especially in the rural districts, that have not, at one period or another, received benefit from this benevolent fund; and both upon the ground of gratitude, as well as from a regard to the general interests of the Association, they are called upon to give it a liberal support. It cannot but be a matter of regret that there should be so many blanks in the list of annual

\* Of late years a more liberal spirit has presided over the distribution of this fund. The original restrictions imposed with regard to the amount of the donation permitted to be given, and with regard also to the circumstances of the minister and congregation warranting a grant, have been either altogether removed or considerably modified.

collections to this excellent fund. Both the amount and the usefulness of it might easily be doubled or trebled, without any particular effort on the part of the congregations.\*

A considerable time elapsed, after the departure of Messrs. Telfar and Smith for America, before any other missionary from the Associate synod crossed the Atlantic. Soon after Mr. Telfar's arrival in that country, a petition was presented to the synod from some people in New Cambridge, province of New York, requesting that Mr. Telfar, who was then in Philadelphia, might be permitted to settle among them as their pastor. The synod were not sufficiently acquainted with the circumstances of the congregation of New Cambridge, to determine whether Mr. Telfar should become their pastor or not; but they appointed him to go and labour for a considerable period in that place, and afterward to send home a particular account of the state of that congregation to the presbytery of Glasgow, who were authorized by the synod to proceed in the business as they might see cause. It would appear that Mr. Telfar did not settle in New Cambridge, for only two years elapsed when a call was given by this congregation to Mr. Kinloch of Paisley, who declined accepting of it. In the meantime they were obliged to remain without a fixed ministry.

Soon after this a petition was presented from some people in the county of Cornwallis, in Nova Scotia, earnestly requesting that a preacher might be sent to labour among them. All that the synod could do at present for them, was to send an affectionate letter expressing sympathy for them in their destitute situation. A renewed application was made by the same people, three years afterward, when the synod appointed Mr. James Thorburn, one of their probationers, to be ordained by the presbytery of Glasgow, and to repair with all convenient speed to Nova Scotia. But notwithstanding this appointment, Mr. Thorburn remained (for what reason I am unable to state) in this country; and the people of Cornwallis were obliged to exercise their patience for several years longer. In the spring of 1785, a call was forwarded by them to Mr. Hugh Graham, probationer; and this person having received

\* The congregations, in connection with the synod, having now considerably increased in number, and being scattered over a wide extent of country, it was found necessary to erect in rapid succession three new presbyteries. These were the presbytery of Perth, which was constituted for the first time on the 4th September, 1788; the presbytery of Stirling and Falkirk, which was erected on the 16th May, 1793; and the presbytery of Kilmarnock, which held its first meeting on the 2d September, 1795. The ministers who presided at the formation of these presbyteries respectively, in the order in which they have now been mentioned, were Mr. John Fraser, Auchtermuchty; Mr. John Belfrage, Falkirk; and Mr. James Moir, Tarbolton.

another call from the congregation of South Shields, in the north of England, the competition was decided by the synod in favour of the people of Cornwallis. Mr. Graham acquiesced in the decision of the synod, and having set out for his destination, he continued to labour in Nova Scotia for a number of years.

Messrs. Telfar and Clark, the two brethren, in connection with the Associate synod, who were labouring in the States of America, united with the ministers of other presbyterian denominations in forming a transatlantic synod, which was declared to be independent of any of the ecclesiastical judicatories in Scotland. The synod was first constituted on the 30th of October, 1782, under the designation of the "Associate Reformed synod of North America;" and the ministers who united in the formation of it were the brethren now mentioned, the whole of the brethren belonging to the Reformed Presbytery in America,\* and all the ministers of the Anti-burgher Presbytery in Pennsylvania, with the exception of two. They adopted as the basis of their union the Westminster Confession of Faith, and the Larger and Shorter Catechisms; excluding, however, from their profession such parts of the Confession as describe the powers of civil government in relation to religion. These they reserved "for a candid discussion on some future occasion, as God should be pleased to direct." In the article of their union, relating to the National covenants, they gave no opinion about the duty of covenanting, or about the "binding nature" of the covenants on posterity; but they agreed to declare their "hearty approbation of the earnest contending for the truth, and magnanimous sufferings in its defence, by which their pious ancestors were enabled to distinguish themselves in the last two centuries;" and they assured each other, "that they have an affectionate remembrance of the National Covenant of Scotland, and of the Solemn League of Scotland, England, and Ireland, as well intended engagements to support civil and religious liberty." One of their articles of union had for its object the restoration of the doctrine of free communion, "which (say they) some of our denomination, through inattention, have long opposed." On this subject they expressed themselves in the following language:—"The United Presbyteries acknowledge it to be their duty, to treat pious people of other denominations with great attention and tenderness. They are willing, *as God offereth opportunity, to extend communion to*

\* These brethren had been sent out, as missionaries, by the Reformed Presbytery in Scotland, and had formed themselves into a presbytery in America, in connection with their Scottish brethren.

*all, who, in every place call upon the name of the Lord Jesus,* Confession, chap. 26, Section 2. But as occasional communion, in a peculiarly divided state of the church, may produce great disorders, if it is not conducted with much wisdom and moderation, they esteem themselves and the people under their inspection inviolably bound, in all ordinary cases, to submit to every restriction of their liberty, which general edification renders necessary."

The rule, which this synod adopted for regulating the admission into their society of persons connected with other presbyterian denominations, displayed an excellent spirit, and ought to regulate the conduct of all religious denominations in receiving into their communion persons who apply to them from other societies. As the Reformed synod was avowedly established on the general principles of the presbyterian system, as detached from the local peculiarities by which the most considerable parties of presbyterians had been hitherto distinguished, so they agreed "to reject all such applications for admission to fixed communion to the synod, that may at any time be made by persons belonging to other denominations of presbyterians, as evidently arise from caprice, personal prejudice, or any other schismatical principles. And the only admissible application shall be such as, upon deliberate examination, shall be found to arise from conviction of duty, and to discover Christian meekness towards the party whose communion is relinquished; or such as are made by considerable bodies of people, who are not only destitute of a fixed gospel ministry, but cannot be seasonably provided for by the denomination of presbyterians to which they belong."\*

Soon after the formation of this synod, a letter was received from it by the Associate synod in Scotland, in which the united brethren expressed their continued regard for the covenanted reformation of Britain and Ireland, particularly of Scotland; and requested preachers to be sent, to assist them in publishing the gospel of Christ. In reply to this communication, the Associate synod expressed their joy to hear of their brethren in America adhering to the same principles with themselves, and wished them success in the work of the

\* The above statements concerning the formation of the Associate Reformed synod of North America are given upon the authority of a pamphlet (published in 1783) entitled, "*Peace and harmony restored: Being an account of the agreement which took place amongst the Burgher and Antiburgher Seceders, and the Reformed Presbytery of North America, in summer 1782.*" From the same source I am enabled to mention the names of the following ministers, as connected with the American synod at its formation:—Messrs. David Telfar, Matthew Henderson, John Cuthbertson, John Mason, Thomas Clark, James Proudfoot, William Logan, Robert Annan, John Roger, John Smith, — Dobbins, John Murray, David Annan, and — Linn.

Lord ; but stated, that they could not at present send them any preachers.

Soon after the arrival of Mr. Graham in Nova Scotia, an application was made to the synod for another labourer to be sent to that part of the vineyard. This application was received from some presbyterians in Amherst, who promised to give to any minister that might be sent, sixty-five pounds of annual stipend, besides allowing him a sum of thirty pounds to defray the expense of his outward voyage. The synod appointed the presbytery of Glasgow to endeavour to find a minister, who might be willing to undertake this mission. At a subsequent meeting, the presbytery reported that they had not been able to find a brother who would undertake the mission. An injunction was then given to all the presbyteries, to converse with the probationers within their bounds, to see if any of them were willing to accept of the invitation given by the people of Amherst, and they were to report the result of their inquiry to a committee appointed to take the charge of this business. It appears that the presbyteries were unsuccessful, for no preacher was sent.

Several years elapsed, during which the synod received no communication from the brethren in Nova Scotia. In May 1793, Mr. John Brown was appointed by the synod to write a letter to the brethren in that quarter, requiring them to give an account of the state of religion in their congregations. Two years afterwards, a letter was received from Mr. Graham, containing a request, that the synod would strengthen their hands by sending additional labourers ; and the necessity of complying with this request was become the more urgent, that Mr. David Smith of Londonderry, in Nova Scotia, was now removed from the scene of his labours by death.

On receiving this intelligence, the synod resolved to make every effort to send additional missionaries to Nova Scotia. Messrs. George Williamson, John Kyle, Archibald Harper, and John Cooper, probationers, were required to take the matter into their serious consideration, with a view to their being sent ; and they were to intimate their resolution, as soon as possible, to the synod's committee, who were authorized to defray the expenses of the mission from the common fund. It was proposed at the same time, that Mr. William Kidston of Stow, should proceed to the same destination, while supply of sermon would be provided for his congregation during his absence ; and after labouring for a season in Nova Scotia, he was to be at liberty to return to his charge at Stow, unless he should find a wider field of usefulness in the colony. None of the probationers now mentioned consented to cross the Atlantic, with the exception of Mr. Harper.

But after he had given his consent, he received a call from the congregation of Borrowstonness in Scotland, which produced a change in his resolution, for when the subject was brought before the synod, he intimated his desire to remain in this country; and the synod, yielding to his wishes, sanctioned his ordination in Borrowstonness, where he continued labouring during the remainder of his days. With regard to Mr. Kidston, no farther steps were taken, as the committee, who were appointed to correspond with him on the subject of his mission, reported that nothing could be done in the matter, unless he would consent to demit his charge. Thus the exertions of the synod to reinforce the mission in Nova Scotia proved at this time abortive.

In the following year, a representation and petition were received from the presbytery of Truro,\* renewing their request for additional missionaries. The synod appointed a friendly answer to be returned; and they adopted a resolution, authorizing the Professor of Divinity to recommend for licence those students whom he might think qualified to go as preachers to Nova Scotia, provided they had been engaged in the study of divinity for two or more years. Soon after this, Messrs. John Waddel and Matthew Dripps were sent to strengthen the hands of the brethren who were labouring in that region of the globe. In a communication received from Nova Scotia, some time after the arrival of these preachers, it was stated, that Mr. Waddel had been ordained as colleague to Mr. Cock, in the united congregations of Truro and Onslow, and that Mr. Dripps had been disabled from preaching by severe bodily distress. The synod sent a letter, in reply to this communication, encouraging the brethren to persevere in their labours, and expressing their determination to give them every assistance in their power. They also mentioned, that if it were judged necessary, for the recovery of Mr. Dripps' health, that he should return to Scotland, they would welcome his return, and assist in defraying the expenses of his journey homeward.†

While they were thus exerting themselves to send the gospel to foreign lands, in connection with the Secession church, they showed their willingness to co-operate with Christians of other denominations in the same benevolent work; for the London Missionary Society having been newly formed, and being about to commence its operations among the heathen, the synod cordially acquiesced in an overture which was in-

\* The brethren in Nova Scotia had formed themselves into a presbytery under this designation.

† Mr. Dripps was afterwards ordained at Shelburn, in Nova Scotia.

troduced for the purpose of recommending that Society to their favourable notice. In this overture, it was proposed, that the synod should appoint a committee to correspond with the Society in London, assuring them of the synod's hearty approbation of their design, and wishing them all success in the accomplishment of it; and though they could not, "as a body," promise them any pecuniary aid, seeing "they were not an opulent society, and were engaged in other missions," yet "they did not doubt but that many individuals among them would cheerfully contribute their mite." The committee appointed to correspond with the London Society, on this occasion, consisted of Messrs. James Hall, James Peddie, John Dick, and Thomas Aitchison.

I may here be permitted to add, that it was by a minister of the Secession church (the late excellent Dr. Waugh, of Wells Street, London) the fundamental principle of the London Missionary Society was originally framed; and the high place which that Society has long occupied in public estimation, has been in a great measure owing to the catholic spirit by which that principle is characterized.\* The pledge which the Associate synod gave to the Society, when it was first formed, has been faithfully redeemed. The pulpits of the Secession have, generally speaking, been cheerfully thrown open to the successive deputations that have periodically visited Scotland, to plead the cause of that Society; and, by the members of the Secession congregations, comparatively poor though they be, many thousands of pounds have been cast into its treasury. When Dr. Waugh visited Scotland in 1815, on behalf of the Society, he carried with him to London the very liberal sum of £1,420, which was collected almost exclusively in the churches of the Secession. The same individual visited Scotland a second time, in 1819, on the same errand, when, though his labours did not extend over such a wide field as during his former visit, he received, chiefly from the congregations of his brethren in the Secession, the sum of £737 16s. Mr. Broadfoot, another of the Seceding ministers in London, visited Scotland on behalf of the same Society, in 1823, and during a short tour, he collected, chiefly among the congregations of the Secession, the sum of £700.\* These instances are a few of the many that might have been here recorded, for the purpose of showing the liberal support which the London Missionary Society has received from the ministers and people belonging to the Secession church. A similar spirit of liberality has been manifested by them to the Baptist and other missionary institutions. Such conduct is

\* Memoir of Dr. Waugh. Third edition, p. 153. † Ibid. pp. 201, 208, 210.

the more creditable, that the congregations from whom these collections have been received, consist, for the most part, of the poorer classes of society, and have considerable pecuniary exertions to make in supporting the institutions of religion among themselves.

In order to promote the comfort and respectability of that most useful class of men, the probationers,\* whose weekly labours are so serviceable to the church, a small increase was made, in 1795, to their very moderate salary. Hitherto, half a guinea constituted the remuneration which they received (exclusive of board) for the services of each Sabbath. Henceforward congregations were enjoined to pay them, for their weekly labours, the sum of fifteen shillings; and a recommendation was at the same time given to the more affluent congregations to increase this sum; but a discretionary power was also given to presbyteries to lower the sum, in the case of the poorer congregations, to twelve shillings. At a subsequent period, this weekly allowance was raised to its present amount, one guinea.

In 1798, the probationers presented a petition to the supreme court, requesting that arrangements might be made with regard to their appointments, so as to grant them an opportunity of partaking of the Lord's Supper, at least four times every year. The synod highly approved of their petition, and readily agreed to grant the prayer of it. A recommendation was given to presbyteries to appoint such preachers as might be within their bounds, to assist at sacramental occasions, that thus they might enjoy their Christian privilege of observing the ordinance of the Supper; and one of the brethren, who ordinarily assisted at these occasions, was to be appointed to supply the preacher's place, by preaching for him in a vacant congregation.

Another regulation concerning the probationers, adopted in the following year, was, that they should hold diets of examination in those vacant congregations, where they might be appointed to preach, and that they should attend to the visitation of the sick. It was at the same time enjoined by the synod, that the presbyteries should require the students of

\* For the sake of those who are not well-acquainted with the forms and institutions of the Secession Church, it may be necessary to state, that the *probationers* are the young men who have been licensed by the presbyteries to preach the gospel, but who have not yet been ordained in a fixed charge. A scheme of appointments is made out, at every meeting of synod, according to which the probationers go the round of all the vacant congregations, preaching in one or other of them every Sabbath, to give the congregations an opportunity of hearing them, that, should they be pleased with their doctrine and manner of life, they may give them a call to become their pastor.

divinity, who were under their inspection, to deliver each a discourse before them, at least once every year.

A representation being made to the synod, at their meeting in April 1799, concerning the importance of sending some of the brethren to itinerate in those districts of the country where a pure ministration of the gospel was not enjoined, the proposal was favourably received ; and, in accordance with it, Messrs. John Brown and John King were sent to labour, for two months during the summer, in some of the northern counties ; while Messrs. David Wilson and John Leitch were appointed to labour, for the same period, in the south-western districts of Scotland. An application was this year made to the synod, by some people in the town of Manchester, for a regular supply of sermon. In answer to this petition, Secession preachers were immediately sent to labour in that town. About two years after this, a call was given by the Manchester Secession congregation to Mr. Robert Jack, minister at Greenock, who, at his own request, was removed by the synod to Lancashire. Being an able and a popular preacher, the congregation of Manchester flourished greatly under his ministry ; and, from the period of his settlement among them, till the present time, it has maintained a highly respectable footing among the English dissenting congregations.

## CHAPTER XVII.

Old and New Light controversy—Description of the controversy—Representation and petition of Mr. John Fraser—Discussions on Mr. Fraser's petition—Committee appointed to review the questions of the Formula—Proceedings of committee—Overture of forbearance recommended—The Synod delay giving judgment on the overture—*Interim Formula* adopted—Several ministers dissent from the adopting of it—Synod sermon by Mr. John Dick—Sermon published—Gives offence—Extracts from it—Remarks—Professor Lawson's pamphlet—Outcry against it—Extracts from it—Complaints preferred against Messrs. Dick and Lawson—Great ferment in sessions and congregations—Synod table covered with petitions—Motion by Mr. James Hall—Motion by Mr. Michael Gilfillan—Latter motion carried—Dissents entered by a number of ministers—Preamble adopted—State of the question explained—Petitions against the Preamble—Debates upon the subject—Motion to adjourn the discussion of the question—Motion to dismiss the Preamble—Former motion carried—Several ministers and elders protest against decision—Address published by Synod—Extracts from Address—Original Burgher Presbytery formed—Kilpatrick process before Court of Session—Synod accused of disloyalty—Spirited conduct of the ministers of Edinburgh and Glasgow—Vindication of Synod by the Lord Advocate—Declaration by the Synod—Pamphlet by Dr. Porteous of Glasgow—Extracts—Mr. Peddie's reply—Extracts from Mr. Peddie's pamphlet—Explanatory statement concerning power of the magistrate—Letter written to separating brethren—Form themselves into a Synod—Perth process—Importance of it—Decided in favour of the New Light party—Interlocutor of Lords of Session—Original Burgher Synod republish the Session Testimony—Publish an Appendix to the Testimony—Their opinion of the National Church—Proposed union betwixt Original Burghers and Establishment—Proceedings concerning it—Inconsistent with Secession Testimony—Remarks on the subject.

MORE than half a century had now elapsed since the disruption of the Secession church, by means of the burghess-oath controversy. During the course of that period, nothing had occurred to mar, to any great extent, the harmony which prevailed in the Associate synod. Though a variety of questions had been introduced, relating to the formation of new congregations, the settlement of ministers, and the general government of the church, and though there had sometimes been keen and protracted discussions, yet there had been no serious dissension among the brethren, and no controversy had arisen of such consequence as to produce any great ferment throughout the association. This section of the Secession had enjoyed much internal peace; it had also been favoured with a high degree of external prosperity. But toward the close of the eighteenth century, the harmony of this portion of the church was disturbed by one of those convulsions, which take place occasionally in all human societies, and which, however

much they are to be deplored, on account of their bringing into angry collision the discordant elements of our nature, yet are ultimately productive of good, inasmuch as, like storms in the natural world, they tend to purify that particular region where their influence is felt. This convulsion was occasioned by those discussions, which were carried on for several years, in the Associate synod, concerning certain questions in the Formula, relating to the two much-agitated points of the power of the magistrate in matters of religion, and the obligation of the National covenant upon posterity.

The controversy which originated in these discussions, and to which I am now about to direct the attention of the reader, has ordinarily been termed, "The Old and New Light Controversy." I find it difficult to give a just description of the character of it. It differed materially from the controversy which was carried on concerning the above-mentioned points in the General Associate synod, of which a full account has been given in a preceding part of this work. The General synod remodelled the whole of their Testimony; and they asserted the complete independence of Christ's spiritual kingdom, refusing to give to the magistrate any power to interfere in matters of religion; they also affirmed, that the Solemn League and Covenant enjoined, under civil penalties, matters that were purely religious; and, in so far as it did so, they pronounced it to be unwarrantable. The Associate synod did none of these things. They neither remodelled their Testimony, nor abjured the power of the magistrate in matters of religion, nor expressed disapprobation of any part of the national covenants. But they adopted an explanatory statement, which they prefixed to the formula of questions, proposed to preachers and ministers at receiving licence and ordination; and in which they declared, that they did not require any preacher or minister to approve of compulsory measures in religion; also, that, while they admitted the obligation of the covenants on posterity, they did not interfere with those disputes which had been carried on concerning the nature and kind of it. On account of their adopting this statement, a breach was made in the synod, by some of the members renouncing its authority, and forming themselves into a separate religious society; and the controversy which was carried on concerning the topics in dispute, was characterized by a considerable degree of bitterness. My readers will be able to judge, from the following details, how far the purity of the faith, and the interests of truth, were involved in this unseemly strife.

On the 13th of May, 1795, the following document was submitted to the consideration of the Associate synod, by Mr. John Fraser, minister at Auchtermuchty:—

“ The representation and petition of the subscriber humbly sheweth,

“ That a concern for the interests of pure and undefiled religion, and for the prosperity of the ecclesiastical society with which he stands connected, prompts him to trouble this reverend court with a declaration of his mind concerning some of our religious sentiments, and to solicit a necessary reform.

“ It is a great mercy that the gospel is hitherto preserved among us in its purity. The doctrine of free grace, reigning through the righteousness of Jesus Christ to the eternal life of men, in connexion with all other fundamental truths revealed in the oracles of God, is, I hope, a doctrine cordially believed, and explicitly preached, by all the ministers belonging to this synod; and, to their great honour, no Socinian, Arminian, or Neonomian errors, repugnant to it, have ever been tolerated by them. But we profess adherence not only to fundamental truth, but also to many other doctrines of inferior importance. Among these are the power of the civil magistrate in regard to religion, and the perpetual obligation of our public national covenants upon posterity. The former is expressly asserted in the 23d chapter of the Westminster Confession of Faith; and the second question of our Formula, I apprehend, allows us not to differ from that Confession in the smallest jot or tittle of doctrine contained in it; for the words of it are, ‘ Do you sincerely own and believe the whole doctrine contained in the Confession of Faith; and do you acknowledge the said Confession as the confession of your faith?’ &c. The obligation of our covenants is also the subject of the 4th question of said Formula; the words of which are, ‘ Do you own and acknowledge the perpetual obligation of the National Covenant, and of the Solemn League and Covenant?’ &c. At our licence and ordination, we solemnly professed to hold these principles, and this profession is renewed as oft as we concur in licensing and ordaining others; for we demand their assent to the questions of the Formula, as a test of their orthodoxy, and of their holding the same principles with ourselves.

“ But it is a fact well known to us all, that, many years ago, a pamphlet was published against the Antiburghers, bearing the name of a late respectable member of this court, and containing the following doctrines:—‘ That all legal establishments of religion are improper and unwarrantable; and that our covenants are obligatory upon posterity, materially considered, but have no obligation upon us, entirely of the same nature with their obligation upon our fathers who swore them.’ Since the publication of that pamphlet, it has been read by many of us; and there is reason to think its principles have been adopted, not only by private Christians in our com-

munion, but also by some members of synod ; which I mention, not to the discredit of any of them ; for it is possible they imbibed such opinions without adverting to their inconsistency with our Confession of Faith and Formula ; and I know that some young brethren, sensible of this inconsistency, have acted so honestly as to refuse an unlimited assent to the questions of the Formula, declaring themselves to be of these sentiments. The synod also, with all the presbyteries and members composing it, have always borne with such brethren, and we live in the closest fellowship with them, without making any distinction between them and other brethren, which tolerant spirit I do not absolutely condemn. But, since we are disposed to exercise such forbearance, and since we all seem now sensible that the principles of the above-mentioned pamphlet accord not with our Confession of Faith and Formula, I think it highly necessary that the Formula be altered, and rendered more consistent with the sentiments of all our ministers, elders, probationers, and students. What pity it is, that the smallest contrariety should exist between the sentiments of any of us, and our solemn profession, when our principles and profession are in the main so consonant to the unerring standard of truth ? Doubtless the profession of a church ought perfectly to harmonize with her real principles ; and nothing, either essential or circumstantial, should be professed, which is not fully believed.

“ May it therefore please this reverend synod, to apply a proper remedy against the present corruption ; and, by that means relieve me, and other brethren, from the perplexity and uneasiness it gives us. That he who holdeth the seven stars in his right hand, and walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks, may be graciously present with this reverend court, to direct them in this momentous affair, and that truth and peace may ever prevail among the members of this synod, is the prayer of their affectionate brother, and humble servant,  
JOHN FRASER.”

It was agreed that this representation should lie upon the table till next meeting of synod, that, during the interval, members might have it under their consideration. Messrs. William Fletcher of Bridge-of-Teith, and Thomas Porteous of Orwell, craved to have it marked, that they disapproved of the synod receiving such a paper, and that they were of opinion it ought to have been read only extra-judicially.

When the synod met in the month of September, Mr. Fraser's representation occasioned a long discussion, at the close of which it was moved, “ That a committee be appointed to review the questions in the Formula, betwixt this and

next meeting of synod, and bring in an overture for uniting the members of this court in their sentiments respecting the power given in our Confession of Faith to the civil magistrate, in matters of religion, and respecting the obligation of our National Covenants upon posterity; and that said committee inform themselves of what scruples are entertained on these subjects; and in the mean time, that the presbyteries be allowed to exercise forbearance at licence and ordination, with respect to the articles above-mentioned; it being always understood that said forbearance shall not preclude this synod from adhering to the Formula, as it now stands, if they shall judge proper." It was moved as an amendment to this motion, that the last part of it, from the words "*and in the mean time,*" be omitted; but the original motion was carried by a great majority. Messrs. William Kidston, sen., and William Willis, dissented from this decision. Mr. Willis afterward withdrew his dissent, and craved to have it marked, that, in his opinion, the law should have effect while it existed. The following persons were appointed a committee, for the purposes mentioned in the resolution now stated. Messrs. John Dick (moderator), David Walker, John Belfrage, David Greig, William Taylor, Andrew Lothian, Robert Jaffray, James Dewar, William Kidston, sen., George Lawson, James Hall, James Peddie, Thomas Porteous, James Husband, John Fraser, David Hepburn, Michael Gilfillan, and William Fletcher, ministers, with fourteen elders.

This committee met at Edinburgh, on the 20th of October. There was a full attendance of ministers. All the questions of the Formula were read over, one by one. A variety of alterations (some of which were merely verbal), were proposed, and agreed to. The chief discussion took place on the second and fourth questions of the Formula. The second question required an approbation of the *whole* doctrine of the Confession of Faith. An objection was made to this, on the ground that said Confession gave greater power to the civil magistrate in matters of religion, than to many seemed agreeable to the word of God. A similar objection was made to the fourth question, which required an approbation of the covenants. After a long debate it was moved, *That said doctrine of our Confession, respecting the magistrate's power, and of our covenants, be made a matter of forbearance.* Another motion was made, *That they should proceed to explain without voting forbearance.* The vote being taken, the first of these motions was carried. The committee then prepared the following overture of forbearance, which they agreed to recommend to the synod, to be passed into an act:—

"The Associate synod hereby declare their attachment to

the doctrine of the Westminster Confession of Faith, and Catechisms, Larger and Shorter, which were adopted by the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland, in the year 1647 and 1648; at the same time, hereby declaring, that although they wish to fear God, and honour the king, and consider subjection to the powers that are as an important duty incumbent on all men, yet as the power respecting religion ascribed to the civil magistrate in said Confession and Larger Catechism, as also in the National Covenant of Scotland, and the Solemn League and Covenant, has been, and still is, a matter of doubtful disputation among good and faithful men, the synod no longer make it a term of ministerial and Christian communion, but will exercise forbearance with brethren, whatever their sentiments be on that article; and they hereby declare, that the assent of probationers, at their licence, and of ministers and elders, at their ordination, to the second question of the Formula, is not in future to be considered as an acknowledgment of said power." They further agreed to recommend, that the second question of the Formula should contain in it a special reference to this act, which it was proposed to adopt, so that persons answering the question should express their approbation of the doctrine contained in the Confession and Catechisms, "as these were received and approved of, by the act of Associate synod, 17—."

The report of the committee was laid before the synod at their meeting in April 1796. They delayed giving judgment concerning the above overture, till their meeting in spring the following year; and in the meantime, they ordered the overture to be printed, along with Mr. Fraser's representation and petition, and all the minutes of synod respecting these documents. They further gave a recommendation to members, to converse in a brotherly manner on the questions of the Formula, which had occasioned a difference of sentiment, and to endeavour to remove groundless jealousies from the minds of one another. For the sake of those who might have scruples in giving an assent to the second and fourth questions of the Formula, as they stood in their present form, it was deemed proper that an *interim* Formula should be adopted on the points involved in these questions, till the meeting of synod in spring 1797. It was accordingly resolved, that the following questions should be substituted, during the interval, in the room of those that were ordinarily put to persons receiving licence or ordination.

Question Second,—“Do you sincerely own and believe the whole doctrine contained in the Confession of Faith, Larger and Shorter Catechisms, compiled by the Assembly of Divines

that met at Westminster, with Commissioners from the Church of Scotland, as said Confession and Catechisms were received and approved by the acts of the General Assembly 1647 and 1648, to be founded in the word of God? And do you believe that the power of the civil magistrate, in matters of religion, mentioned in said Confession, should always be understood in a sense consistent with the spiritual nature of Christ's kingdom, which is not of this world? And, in this view, Do you receive the said Confession and Catechisms, as the confession of your faith? and, Do you promise, through divine grace, firmly and constantly to adhere to the doctrine contained in said Confession of Faith and Catechisms, and to assert, maintain, and defend it to the utmost of your power, against all errors and opinions contrary to it?"

Question Fourth,—“Do you own the perpetual obligation of the National Covenant of Scotland, and the Solemn League, in so far as the matter of them is founded upon, and agreeable to, the Holy Scriptures, without approving of the enforcement of these covenants by civil pains and penalties? And do you believe that these covenants were a solemn engagement of adherence to the truths and ordinances of Christ, contained in his word, and that additional guilt will be contracted by the present and future generations, if they shall renounce these Reformation principles? And, Do you believe that public covenanting is a duty, under the New Testament, to be performed when God in his providence calls to it?"

Messrs. Porteous and Willis craved to have it marked, that they disapproved of any alteration being made in the questions of the Formula. Mr. George Lawson dissented from the deed of synod, adopting the question respecting the Confession of Faith. Mr. Andrew Lothian dissented from the synod's adopting the question respecting the covenants; and Messrs. David Greig, James Dewar, John Leitch, and Walter Greig, dissented from adopting either of the questions, on the ground that they appeared to them to be indefinite, and not calculated to answer any valuable purpose. It was not intended that these questions should remain permanently in their new form, but merely that they should serve as an *interim* Formula, until the synod should give judgment on the overture concerning forbearance, submitted to their consideration by the committee.

At the opening of this meeting of synod, Mr. John Dick, minister at Slateford,\* who had been moderator at the preceding meeting, preached a sermon, which the brethren, who

\* Afterwards translated to Glasgow.

afterwards withdrew from the synod, condemned in no measured terms. The subject of Mr. Dick's discourse was, 2 Tim. i. 13, "Hold fast the form of sound words." The sermon was speedily published under the title of *Confessions of Faith shown to be necessary, and the duty of Churches with respect to them explained*. In the concluding part of the discourse, the preacher urged powerfully upon his brethren the duty of exercising forbearance toward one another with regard to the points at issue between them.

In a note appended to the discourse, when it was published, Mr. Dick stated more fully what were his sentiments on the controverted points; and as this sermon occasioned great lamentation, and was the subject of much testimony-bearing, on the part of those who at this time renounced as unholy the communion of the Associate synod, it will be proper to give my readers an opportunity of judging for themselves how far Mr. Dick's sentiments warranted such strong condemnatory language as was employed concerning them. Mr. Dick was a strenuous advocate for the exercise of forbearance; and, in the appendix to his discourse, he endeavoured to show, that the articles in dispute were the very articles concerning which forbearance might be lawfully exercised. The following are the remarks with which he endeavoured to enforce his views:—

"As I have shown in the sermon, that a church may permit some things to be matters of forbearance, the only question to be considered is, Whether the articles specified be of such a nature, that forbearance may be exercised about them? Let us begin with the covenants. Against the exercise of forbearance with respect to them, it may be objected, that it is criminal not to acknowledge a moral obligation, and that the interests of the church will be endangered, if this security of her doctrine, worship, and government, be parted with. But, if the covenants be binding on posterity, their obligation is not so clear as the obligation of truth, of justice, and of charity. It is not so clear as that of many of the duties called moral, which, when plainly stated, commend themselves to every man's conscience. \* \* \* The impropriety, therefore, seems to consist, not in leaving out, but in retaining, a subject of doubtful disputation, as a part of our creed. Nothing but what is plain, or may easily be made plain to the meanest capacity, should be admitted among our terms of communion. On dubious points, *let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind, and have faith to himself before God*.

"But if the formal obligation of the covenants be not acknowledged, the church will lose the security given by them to her doctrine, worship, and government. To this objection I answer, That if a man believes all the truths contained in

the Confession of Faith, and acknowledges himself to be bound, by the paramount authority of God, to maintain and defend them, he gives all the security which the church can reasonably demand from him. Would it not be absurd to exclude from a society, a man who declares himself to be obliged, by the highest possible authority—the authority of Heaven—to adhere to certain articles of confederation, merely because he cannot farther say, that he is sensible of an unspeakably inferior obligation, resulting from a remote transaction of his father's? Can none be faithful friends to the doctrines of the gospel, and to the laws and ordinances of Christ, unless they enter into a covenant, or be parties to one already made? Alas! what a sweeping sentence! It pronounces the condemnation of all Christians, except a few dissenters; of all the church of God, from the days of the apostles till about two hundred years ago; for though I have read ecclesiastical historians, modern and ancient, I never heard of covenanting before that period. Where, then, is the danger of leaving this article out of our creed? We shall not cease, I trust, to be good Christians, good presbyterians, good Seceders, zealous for the truth, and active in its service.

“Let us now consider the other article,—the power of the civil magistrate in matters of religion. It ought not to surprise any, that some have formed such a notion of the spiritual nature of the kingdom of Christ, as to think that it is entirely distinct from the kingdoms of the world; and that he alone has a right to interfere in the management of its affairs. If this be an error, it is a pardonable one. The Head of the Church will not severely censure the man who is so tender of his prerogatives, as not to approve of any thing which even seems to encroach upon them. Is it a crime to believe that conscience is so sacred a thing, that no means should be employed which have the least tendency to compel it? Our Confession says, that ‘God alone is the Lord of the conscience.’ It is not every mind which can perceive the consistency of this assertion with the power ascribed by the same Confession to the magistrate. Besides, some think that the vesting of that power in him, constitutes him the sole judge of doctrine; for how shall he take order that blasphemies and heresies be suppressed, but by first judging what opinions are heretical and blasphemous? Nothing can be more foolish than to say, that he is not to judge for himself, but to follow the advice and direction of the church; for, first, according to this scheme, he must divest himself of his own reason and conscience, and substitute the reason and conscience of others as the rule of his procedure; and, secondly, it only transfers the right of judging concerning doctrine from

one to many, from the civil magistrate to the church. But what right has the church to judge for me, any more than the magistrate? She may indeed declare the truth, and tell me what, according to her views, I ought to believe; but if I would act like a Christian and a protestant, I must judge for myself, by employing my own faculties in the study of the scriptures. Can men who have such scruples on this subject, continue to assent to the doctrine of the Confession? No, they cannot. What advantage would the church derive from their assent? Would her interests be secured by hollow professions, and a pretended faith?"\*

These were the statements which Mr. Dick penned and published; and it is exceedingly difficult to perceive wherein their heresy lies. To an ordinary mind, they seem to be distinguished for their candour, their sound sense, and their accordance with scripture. They were, however, made the subject of a grave and formal complaint to the synod. The author was considered by some as impiously attempting, by means of them, to demolish the whole Secession Testimony, and to shake the very foundations of the Christian church; and, in an official document published some time after this, by the brethren who withdrew from the synod, they were formally declared to be one of the grounds of their separation.

Another individual who pled the cause of forbearance, was Mr. George Lawson of Selkirk, the learned and pious Professor of Divinity to the Associate synod. Mr. Lawson published a pamphlet, entitled, *Considerations on the Overture lying before the Associate synod, respecting some alterations in the Formula concerning the power of the civil magistrate in matters of religion; and the obligation of our Covenants, National and Solemn League, on posterity*. As Mr. Lawson's views on the subject of the overture were the same as those of Mr. Dick, and as he employed similar arguments (though extended to greater length) in urging upon his brethren the duty of forbearance, so he shared liberally in the reproaches that were cast upon his friend. His "Considerations" were peculiarly offensive to some of the brethren, because it was regarded as a heinous sin for a Professor of Divinity to plead for forbearance on such important points as were involved in the overture. Not only were replies addressed to him from the press, in the form of "Letters,"† and other instructive

\* Sermon by Mr. Dick, pp. 32—36.

† See a series of Letters addressed to the Rev. Mr. Lawson, entitled, *An Effectual Remedy to the Disputes presently existing in the Associate Synod respecting the Formula*: By the Rev. William Taylor, Minister at Levenside (afterward at Perth). See another series of Letters addressed to the same

modes of communication; but his pamphlet had a similar honour conferred upon it with Mr. Dick's Sermon, by being made the subject of formal testimony-bearing on the part of the separating brethren.

I shall here insert an extract from Mr. Lawson's pamphlet, that my readers may see what were the sentiments which that eminent man entertained on the great question which is at present agitating the churches in our own and in other countries. If he had lived during the reign of Charles II., of heresy-suppressing memory, a pamphlet containing such sentiments as the following, on the power of the magistrate in matters of religion, would no doubt have been burned by the hand of the common hangman; and the author would, in all probability, have been rewarded for his temerity in publishing it, by being gibbeted at the Grassmarket. But as the golden age of intolerance was now past, and as magistrates had become altogether careless about their duty, and no longer gave themselves any concern about suppressing heresies in the church by means of the sword, what more could those do, who loved compulsory measures in religion, than lament over the publication of such sentiments by a Seceding Professor of Divinity, and testify with all their might against them!

"A prudent man," observed Mr. Lawson, "will look well to his goings, and will avoid every thing that may sting his conscience with unceasing remorse. He will not rashly give his vote, if he is on a British jury, to take away the life of his brother and friend. Far less will he be rash, in a Christian synod, to give his vote for a decision which may well be esteemed a virtual sentence of deprivation to many of his brethren. Suppose we join in such a vote in the present case, it will be for one of these two reasons; either because we think that compulsory measures are principles of the doctrine of Christ, or because we think that no such doctrines are taught in our Confession of Faith, and that those who think so have themselves to blame for their mistake. I cannot see that a third reason, different from either of these, can be imagined. Let us consider, whether either of them is such as ought to satisfy our consciences that we do well in the exercise of such severity to our brethren.

gentleman, entitled, *A Smooth Stone from the Brook*: By the Rev. William Willis, minister at Greenock (afterward at Stirling). These publications will stand a comparison with the most admired productions that have issued, during the strife of the present day, from the Anti-Voluntary Church press. They abound in figures of speech that are well suited to a controversial style of writing; and they may be studied with great advantage by those pamphleteers and speech-makers, who are at present attempting to put down, by force of imagery, the "perjured" and "apostate" Seceders.

“ Those who approve of compulsory measures in religion, no doubt, must think that their brethren err who disapprove of them. But let them judge fairly and candidly. If they do not obstinately shut their eyes to the truth, they must see that themselves have openly professed the same principles of toleration with their brethren, or at least exercised forbearance hitherto towards those who openly avowed these principles. What is the difference between those who formerly declared against compulsory measures in religion, and those who now plead in favour of the overture? Only this, that the former took the liberty to declare their mind, in opposition to doctrines which, in the views of those I am now addressing, stand in our standard-books; whilst the latter endeavour to obtain a constitutional liberty to declare their minds, that neither they nor their brethren may seem to condemn themselves in that which they allow.

“ If there are any (I suppose they are few) who still plead for compulsory measures, and, on that ground, declare against the overture, that is, against the exercise of forbearance towards their brethren who think differently from themselves, I think they would do well to bestow a little attention on this consideration; with what grace it will appear to the world to deny forbearance to their brethren, or, in other words, to do what lies in them to inflict an ecclesiastical death upon a considerable number of brethren whom they love, and whom they highly esteem, for no other reason but their aversion to compulsory measures in religion. Compulsory measures in religion are represented, throughout the Book of the Revelation, as a characteristic, not of the woman clothed with the sun, but of the scarlet-coloured whore. John wondered with great admiration, when he saw this woman drunken with the blood of the saints and martyrs of Jesus. He would have wondered with greater admiration, if he had seen the woman clothed with the sun drunk with the blood of saints and martyrs. Are not the saints martyrs of Jesus, who suffer the loss of their offices, or usefulness, dearer to them than life, that they may maintain a good conscience; although they should labour under an involuntary mistake, even about those points which are the grounds of their sufferings?

“ So odious are compulsory measures in religion, that they have, for the most part, been disavowed or transferred to others, even by those who have practised them. Men who suffered for religion have been generally represented as traitors, or seditious members of society, although they were the meekest and most quiet in the land. For what reason? Because nature itself reclaimed against impositions on conscience, and that with such a loud voice, that inquisitors themselves,

the chief ministers of the kingdom of Moloch, could not bear the character of persecutors.

“Compulsory measures in religion are one of those distinguishing marks of Antichrist, against which protestants have loudly testified, when they smarted under them; and against which, I think, they ought at all times to testify, that they may be found faithful witnesses against the beast, during the whole period of his reign. They are called witnesses in the book of New Testament prophecies; and ought not all the capital abominations of the beast, mentioned in these prophecies, to be the subject of their testimony? But can we consistently with common sense testify against this abomination in the beast, if we bear testimony, at the same time, against those who are averse to his compulsory measures?”\*

Petitions and complaints were presented to the synod, concerning the above-mentioned publications, from the sessions of Cumbernauld, Levenside, and Shotts; also from members belonging to the congregations of Stirling, Shuttle Street (Glasgow), Crawforddyke (Greenock), Kennoway, and Kilpatrick. A petition on the same subject, from the congregation of Orwell, was brought by protest before the synod. The presbytery of Dunfermline had refused to transmit the representation of this congregation, on the ground that it contained personalities against two of their brethren (Messrs. Dick and Lawson), which it was not becoming in them to sanction. Against this refusal of the presbytery the congregation protested; and when the cause came before the synod, their protest was dismissed as ill-founded.

Such was the ferment excited by the discussions concerning the proposed alterations in the Formula, that when the synod met in April 1797, no fewer than forty-one petitions from sessions and congregations were presented on the subject. Of these twenty-seven were *against*, and nine were *in favour of*, making alterations; while five craved delay. After members had delivered their sentiments, the following motion was proposed by Mr. James Hall, one of the ministers of Edinburgh:—

“That the synod defer the consideration of the alterations in the second and fourth questions of the Formula till a future meeting; it being understood, that when this cause shall be re-considered, intimation of such design shall be given at the meeting of synod which shall precede the discussion of it; and that when they re-consider this cause, they shall not give a final decision on it, till they have given sufficient information to all concerned; and in the meantime, that the following de-

\* Considerations on the Overture, &c. pp. 54—56.

claration be prefixed to the present Formula, and read before the questions in it be put at licence or ordination, viz. That whereas some parts of the standard-books of this synod have been interpreted as favouring compulsory measures in religion, the synod hereby declare, that they do not require an approbation of any such principle from any candidate for licence or ordination: And whereas a controversy has arisen among us, respecting the nature and kind of the obligation of our solemn covenants on posterity, whether it be entirely of the same kind upon us as upon our ancestors who swore them, the synod hereby declare, that while they hold the obligation of our covenants upon posterity, they do not interfere with that controversy which has arisen respecting the nature and kind of it, and recommend it to all their members to suppress that controversy, as tending to gender strife rather than godly edifying.”\*

Another motion was proposed by Mr. Michael Gilfillan, minister at Dunblane, to the following effect:—“That the synod dismiss Mr. Fraser’s petition, and the overture of the committee, and adopt the following overture, to be prefixed to the Formula, and read when the questions in it are put at licence and ordination, viz. That whereas, &c. (the same as in the former motion to the end), it being understood, that the synod shall not revive this cause, till they have given sufficient information to all concerned.”

These two motions were put to the vote, when a majority of the synod declared in favour of the latter. Before the vote was taken, Messrs. Knowles, Greig, Lothian, Cockburn, and Shirra, junior, dissented from either of the motions being the state of the vote.

Against the decision of synod the following persons entered their dissent:—Messrs. James Hall, James Peddie, John Dick, George Lawson, George Russell, Robert Jack, William Shaw, William Hadden, Thomas Leckie, Robert Hall, James Dewar, John Leitch, William Kidston, junior, James Gilchrist, James Yule, James Dick, Hector Cameron, and Alexander Lata.

In reference to the two motions that were proposed to the synod, it may be observed, that the explanatory declaration (or Preamble), was common to both. No mention is made in the records of synod of any members being opposed to the adopting of it; with the exception of the four already mentioned. If there were any others, who opposed the adopting of the Preamble, they must have been few in number. The chief difference between the supporters of the motion that was

\* This declaration, which was prefixed to the Formula, was usually designated by the name of the *Preamble*.

carried, and of the one that was lost, was, that the latter wished the synod to delay, in the present agitated state of the sessions and congregations, coming to a final decision on the overture about forbearance, as they wished the question to be left open for discussion till a more favourable period; whereas the former considered it proper to bring the question, without farther delay, to a final determination, by dismissing Mr. Fraser's representation and the committee's overture, and agreeing, at the same time, to prefix the above explanatory statement to the Formula.

With regard to the explanatory declaration, or Preamble, a question has been agitated with considerable keenness, viz. Whether it was consistent with the avowed principles of the synod to prefix such a declaration to the Formula? Those who left the synod, and who assumed to themselves the title of "Original Burghers," maintained that the adopting of the Preamble implied in it a dereliction of those principles, which had previously been held by the Secession Church, concerning the power of the magistrate in matters of religion, and concerning the obligatory nature of the national covenants. Those who adhered to the synod maintained that it implied no such dereliction. In so far as the covenants were concerned the Preamble expressly affirmed, that the synod "held the obligation of our covenants upon posterity." How, in the face of such a declaration, it could be maintained that they had renounced the obligatory nature of the covenants, is a matter which it is not easy to explain. The affirmation was as plain as language could make it; and no fault, certainly, could be reasonably found with the Preamble, as to any ambiguity on this point. If the synod declared, that they did not interfere with the controversy which had arisen "respecting the nature and kind of this obligation," there was surely no heresy in such a declaration. It effected no change in any principle. It was merely a declaration of non-interference with a controversy, which they were not called upon to determine. It left the question concerning "the nature and kind" of the obligation exactly where it found it.

But the most debateable point in the Preamble is that which refers to "compulsory measures in religion." The synod declared, that they did "not require an approbation of any such principle from any candidate for licence or ordination." By this declaration, the synod were considered by those who afterwards left their communion, as abandoning the principle, that the magistrate ought to have power in matters of religion; for, it was affirmed, if he have power at all, it must be "compulsory." According to this view of the declaration, it was regarded as a thorough disowning of the connec-

tion between the church and the state. If this interpretation be correct, then it must be admitted, that the Preamble did contain in it a change of principle. But this was not the view which the synod took of the matter; and at the time the Preamble was adopted, there was no one party in the synod who understood the declaration concerning compulsory measures in religion to imply in it a total disowning of the power of the magistrate in matters of religion. That the majority of the synod, by whom the successful motion was carried, did not mean, by adopting the Preamble, to disown the power of the magistrate *circa sacra*, is sufficiently evident from the circumstance of their *rejecting* an overture, which required them to make this doctrine a matter of forbearance. With the exception of an individual or two, the whole of those brethren, who afterwards accused the synod of abandoning their principles, voted with the majority on this occasion; which shows that *even they* did not at first consider the Preamble as inconsistent with the avowed doctrine of the Secession on this point. Those who voted in the minority, for the unsuccessful motion, took the same view of the Preamble that their brethren in the majority did; for in one of their reasons of dissent they declared, that “the court, by the present decision, have *finally declared their judgment, that the civil magistrate has power in matters of religion, though they seem to deny him a compulsory power.*” That nearly the whole, if not the whole, of the synod, understood the declaration in the Preamble, when it was first adopted, to be completely consistent with the doctrine which the Secession church held concerning the power of the magistrate in religious matters, is placed beyond a doubt by the facts now stated.

What then did the synod mean by not requiring an approbation of “compulsory measures” in religion from candidates for licence or ordination? They meant that they did not require any one of their licentiates or ministers to approve of the magistrate having power to propagate religion by offensive arms, or the power of suppressing heresies and enforcing religious duties by civil punishments. Their doctrine was, that while the magistrate ought to have the power of interfering in matters of religion, the extent and mode of his interference ought to be such as are consistent with a free toleration granted to all who may dissent from the established religion. No attempt ought to be made by him to compel others to embrace the national faith, or to put down by force any form of a religious profession made by others, in opposition to this faith. All that they meant in the Preamble was to disown the doctrine of persecution for conscience’ sake.

Whether these sentiments be right or wrong in themselves, or whether the phraseology, employed in the Preamble to express them, was the happiest that might have been adopted, is not at present the question. The question regards a mere matter of fact, viz. Whether these were the sentiments entertained by the great majority of the synod at that period: and that they were so, is placed beyond all reasonable doubt by the statements already made. No proposition was ever made in the synod, that an act should be passed by them, declaring that the magistrate should have no power in matters of religion. The only proposal made on this subject, was that which was brought forward by the committee in their overture, requiring that the synod would make this article a matter of forbearance. The synod refused to do so. They dismissed the overture; and they prefixed to the Formula a declaration *explanatory of the sense* in which preachers and ministers were understood to give their assent to the doctrine of the Confession of Faith on this point.

When the synod declared that they did not require an approbation of compulsory measures in religion, they adhered strictly to the doctrine which had previously been asserted, on several occasions, by the church to which they belonged. It has already been shown, in a preceding part of this work, that, about ten years after the commencement of the Secession, the Associate presbytery condemned, in an act passed by them (3d February, 1743), "the dangerous extreme of espousing principles in favour of propagating religion by offensive arms." When the Associate synod published, in 1778, a "Re-exhibition of the Testimony," it contained the following declaration:—"It must be acknowledged, that the enforcing of religious duties with civil penalties, and, in too many instances, blending the affairs of church and state with one another, is totally inconsistent with the spiritual nature of Christ's kingdom."\* When the synod adopted, in 1797, the Preamble, they did nothing more than *renew* the declaration which had been once and again made before that period, by the church courts of the Secession.

Those persons who at first gave their sanction to the adopting of the Preamble, and who afterwards affirmed that the synod adopted it with a fraudulent intention, were guilty of calumny against their brethren. They made an affirmation, from which every honourable minded person would have shrunk. They advanced a charge, in support of which they had not the slightest shadow of proof, except what was furnished by their own evil surmisings. To say that the phrase "com-

pulsory measures in religion," is ambiguous, and *may* be so interpreted as to include in it every degree of power exercised by the magistrate, in reference to religion, certainly does not prove that the synod intended it should be so understood. They affirmed that this was not the meaning which they attached to it—that they understood by it nothing more than *persecuting* measures in religion; and they justly considered, that they were not renouncing any principle held by their Fathers of the Secession, when they declared, that they did not require any in their communion to approve of such measures. Common courtesy forbids that we endeavour to affix to the language of individuals, a meaning which they themselves explicitly disown.

A ferment was excited in some of the sessions and congregations, by the adopting of the Preamble, and means were industriously employed to foment and keep alive a spirit of discontent. Pamphlets were circulated with great assiduity. The pulpits resounded with anathemas against the synod for having abandoned their profession. Discussions concerning the power of the magistrate in religious matters, and concerning the obligatory nature of the covenants, became frequent among the village coteries. Many were the learned discussions which issued from the lips of the gifted, on these edifying topics. Printed forms of petition were sent to the quarters where discontent prevailed, that they might receive the signatures of those whose hearts were grieved at the thought of the synod having dropped the whole Secession Testimony. The result of this agitation was, that when the synod met in September 1798, printed petitions were presented from several sessions and congregations, craving that the synod would set aside the Preamble which they had adopted in the preceding year. These petitions gave rise to much discussion. After a long debate, it was moved, "That whereas the synod is precluded, by their deed in April last year, from entering on the immediate consideration of these petitions, allow them to lie on the table till a future meeting, the synod hereby giving notice to all concerned, that they will then resume the consideration of the whole cause respecting the Formula." A counter-motion was made, "That the synod finds, that in consequence of its deed, in April 1797, it cannot grant the prayer of the petitions, and therefore dismisses them; but, at the same time, the synod declares that it will be at liberty, at a future meeting, to recur to the discussion of the cause respecting the Formula, and hereby gives intimation to all concerned." The first of these motions was carried by a great majority; and a question being stated, whether the consideration of the petitions should be resumed at the meeting

in April next year, or delayed till the meeting in September, it was determined to delay the consideration of them till September.

During the interval that was thus permitted to elapse, the ferment did not abate, but rather increased. Several additional petitions were laid upon the synod's table, at their meeting in September 1799. A considerable degree of interest had been excited by the preceding discussions, and there was a full muster of members present at this meeting. After a discussion which lasted during two sederunts, it was moved by Mr. James Hall, "That the synod adjourn the farther discussion of this question till a future meeting of synod; and, in the mean time, appoint a committee of the house to draw up a synodical address to the people of their charge, expressive of our adherence to the doctrine, worship, discipline, and government of the Church of Scotland, and for repelling the calumnious reproaches which have been circulated in the public, that the synod, by what they have done in this business, have abandoned their avowed principles, and that this is designed to be the forerunner of future and more dangerous innovations." A second motion was proposed by Mr. William Willis, "That the synod dismiss the Preamble, and appoint a committee to draw up an address to the public, in order to remove any undue impressions made on the minds of the people." A large majority decided in favour of the first of these motions; ninety-one members having voted for it, while only twenty-eight voted for the second.

Messrs. William Fletcher, William Taylor, and William Watson, ministers, with ten elders, dissented from this decision; and Mr. Willis gave in the following protestation, to which Mr. Ebenezer Hyslop, and two elders, adhered:—"I protest, in my own name, and in the name of all ministers, elders, and private Christians who may adhere to this protest, that as the synod hath obstinately refused to remove the Preamble prefixed to the Formula, and declare their simple and unqualified adherence to our principles, I will no more acknowledge them as over me in the Lord, until they return to their principles."

Mr. Hill recorded his dissent in the following terms:—"I, George Hill, minister of Cumbernauld, do, in mine own name, and in the name of all who shall adhere to my dissent from, and protest against, this deed of synod, in retaining the Preamble to the Formula, hereby declare my adherence to our received principles, and that I shall be at liberty to testify against this deed from the pulpit, or otherwise, and shall also be at liberty to afford relief to all who are aggrieved by this deed, and shall adhere to the same principles with myself,

and to carry this my dissent farther at next meeting, if I shall see cause." Mr. Porteous declared his adherence to Mr. Hill's dissent.

As Messrs. Willis and Hyslop had declared in their protest, that they were no longer in connexion with the synod, their names were erased from the roll; and all who adhered to them were declared to have cut themselves off from the communion of the Associate body. The presbytery of Glasgow were enjoined to intimate this decision to the congregations of these brethren, and to take care that the interests of these congregations should not suffer.

A committee having been appointed, in accordance with the above resolution, to prepare an address, a draught was submitted to the consideration of the synod, during its present meeting; and, after some corrections were made upon it, the committee were enjoined to get it printed and circulated among the congregations, without delay. The address was written in a style of great manliness, and was eminently fitted, by the plainness and honesty of its statements, to remove any false impressions that might have been produced by the proceedings of the synod concerning the Formula, and to restore confidence to the minds of those who were in danger of being led away by the misrepresentations of prejudiced or interested individuals. As this question excited no small turmoil among many of the congregations belonging to the Burgher portion of the Secession; and as the Associate synod were loaded with a plentiful share of abuse, for presuming to declare that they did not require any preacher or minister to approve of compulsory measures in religion, I shall allow that reverend body to be heard in their own defence, by giving one or two extracts from the address which they published on this occasion. After perusing these extracts, the reader will perceive that the outcry which was raised against them, by the small section who seceded from them, was altogether unreasonable.

The object which the synod had in view, in publishing the address, is stated by them in the following language:—  
“ For the information of the ignorant; for rectifying the mistakes of those who have been misinformed; for re-assuring the minds of those who have been taught, that we have renounced our peculiar principles; for allaying the fears of such as are not so much alarmed for what the synod have done, as apprehensive that it is only introductory to more serious and dangerous alterations; and for silencing those who have cruelly abused the simplicity of their neighbours, by defaming our characters, misrepresenting our public synodical deeds, and ascribing to us principles which we solemnly disown, and de-

signs of which we are unconscious ;— we have deemed it expedient to state our own conduct, and the reasons of it, in our own words. We are entitled to demand to be heard ; and we are persuaded, that as much Christian temper has survived the present irreligious feuds, even in those places where they have raged with most violence, as to obtain for us what we ask, to be listened to with candour, and to have our conduct examined deliberately before it be condemned. We shall keep nothing back from public inspection, persuaded that the more our conduct is known, the less it will be condemned ; and we ask no favour, unless this should be deemed one, to take our own representation of our principles and views, rather than the account of those who may be prejudiced, and must know them less perfectly than we do ourselves. We trust that we have not deserved to fall so low in the estimation of any of our people, as not to be able to obtain belief to what we explicitly and solemnly assert."

As it had been maliciously insinuated, that the discussions in the synod, concerning the proposed alterations in the Formula, had originated in a spirit of disaffection to the civil constitution of the country, and as a suspicion had thereby been excited in the minds of those in power, unfavourable to the loyalty of Seceders, the synod in their address, repelled, in a tone of honest indignation, this charge ; and they made an explicit declaration of their unabated attachment to the reigning family, and to the form of government that obtained in Britain ; after which, they endeavoured to disabuse the minds of those who might be prejudiced against them, by stating the precise nature of the controversy which had agitated their congregations. The following passages contained the very marrow of the controversy ; and the reader will find in them an excellent illustration of the apostolic declaration, "Behold how great a matter a little fire kindleth !"

"The controversy among us, indeed, respects the power of the civil magistrate. It is not, however, a political, but an ecclesiastical dispute. It respects not the power which the civil magistrate actually possesses by the constitution of Britain ; but the power which is supposed by some to be ascribed to him doctrinally in our standard-books ; and it respects even this, only in reference to matters of religion. The question is, Whether the magistrate ought to interfere with the decisions of church-courts in matters which are purely ecclesiastical, and to compel men to be of the religious profession of the State ? Nor has even this question ever been proposed as a matter of dispute before the synod. The synod have never presumed to say what is the precise measure of his power in matters of religion, nor to intermeddle with

the private sentiments of their ministers and elders on this point. It is a matter of too difficult discussion to be rashly determined, or to have its limits exactly ascertained and inserted in our terms of communion. But it becomes interesting, in as far as it is supposed to be asserted in our standards; for their doctrine is sanctioned by the public vows of all the ministers and elders of our communion; and it becomes necessary to their integrity, that their views correspond, in the exactest manner, with the grammatical meaning of the terms.

“Here, then, is the point in dispute: What is the precise meaning of our standard-books on this article? Do some parts of them teach the right of the civil magistrate to use compulsory measures in religion? Or do they not? All agree that compulsion, or the employment of civil pains and penalties, to enforce religion, is anti-scriptural. Our forefathers, in the Secession, in the most explicit manner, condemned enforcing our covenants by such means; and have stated their general views on the subject of the magistrate's power, in their answers to Mr. Nairn. But a difference of sentiment exists on the question, Whether any expressions in our standard-books sanction doctrine which the Seceding body have virtually condemned? Those who oppose the Preamble, affirm that they do not; or at least they explain them in such a manner as to satisfy their own minds, and therefore insist to dismiss it as unnecessary. Others are persuaded that such doctrine is taught in them; and, not thinking themselves at liberty to explain away, what to them appears to be the obvious meaning of the terms, by any private interpretation, insist for relief, either by the Preamble, or by some other more expedient mean.

“The synod have not presumed to determine the meaning of our standards on these points; much less have they dared to condemn them as teaching unscriptural and anti-tolerant doctrine. But they are not surprised that many of their members were, and continue to be, of opinion, that they give to the civil magistrate a power inconsistent with their doctrine elsewhere, respecting the headship of Christ, and the liberties of conscience. The known opinions and practices of the times when our Confession was composed, favour their supposition; and the doctrine which they apprehend it to contain, has been condemned by a body of Seceders, who were once of us, and who are generally accounted as firm in their attachment to ancient principles, as we are ourselves. The synod revered the scruples of their brethren on this point, therefore, as proceeding from delicacy of conscience in the matter of a solemn vow, and considered them as entitled to every relief which

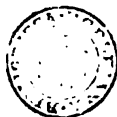
could constitutionally be given them. They deemed it necessary, for the consistency of the Secession Church, that her profession should, beyond controversy, in every thing be consistent with itself. They thought it proper, for the character of the body, that no doubt should remain, whether they hold persecuting principles; and that those who have affirmed it of them should be put to silence by an explicit avowal of their sentiments; and the Preamble was adopted as the least objectionable method that occurred, of attaining at once these several objects.”\*

On the 2d of October, 1799, the two brethren (Messrs. Willis and Hyslop), who had renounced the authority of the synod, met at Glasgow, along with Mr. William Watson, minister at Kilpatrick, who had by this time sent his declination to the moderator of his presbytery; and, after some time spent in prayer and praise, and in consulting what course they ought to pursue, they agreed, along with their elders present, to constitute themselves into a presbytery, independent of the synod. The designation which they assumed, was that of the *Associate Presbytery*.† They agreed also to receive accessions from all who were willing to join them, and to grant supply of sermon to those who might make application for it. In the month of November, Mr. George Hill, minister at Cumbernauld, renounced his connexion with the synod, and became a member of this newly formed presbytery; and, in the course of the following year, their hands were strengthened by the accession of the following ministers:—Mr. Patrick Connal, Bathgate; Mr. William Taylor, Levenside; and Mr. John Jarvie, Perth. Mr. Jarvie's paper of accession, contained in it a “representation of his sufferings.” “Being thrust out of his church by his colleague, he craved some members of presbytery to preach for him, and comfort him with their presence.” The name of Mr. Thomas Porteous of Orwell, was next added to their roll.

No sooner had Mr. Watson withdrawn from the communion of the synod, than some members of his congregation, who wished to adhere to their old connexion, commenced a process before the Lords of Session, for the purpose of having it declared, whether the place of worship, and other property of the congregation, should belong to the party adhering to the synod, or to the party who had left it. In one of the petitions presented to the court, in this process, by Mr. Watson's agent, the substance of which was published in the newspapers, charges and insinuations were thrown out,

\* Address of the Associate synod, &c. pp. 6, 10—14.

† This was the commencement of that section of the Secession, familiarly known by the name of “Old Light,” or, “Original Burghers.”



that tended to bring into discredit the character of the synod for loyalty. It was strongly insinuated, that under the pretext of religion, they were endeavouring to throw loose, points connected with the most important political doctrines, which every sincere Christian was bound to acknowledge and maintain; and the attention of the Lord Advocate, in his official capacity, was solicited from the Bench, to the merits of the present question, as involving matter of much political moment and concern.

Alarmed at being thus charged with disloyalty to their sovereign, and with entertaining designs hostile to the constitution of their country, some members of synod, when they understood what had passed in the court, immediately called a meeting of such of their brethren as could be most readily assembled. At this meeting it was determined to enter an appearance in their own name, and for their brethren in the Secession, as concurrents in the process already commenced. This resolution was adopted by them, in consequence of advice which they received, that it was in this character alone "they could stand forward to repel the injurious attacks which had been made upon them, and to give such information to the court, and to the world, as would serve to convince them that the decisions of the synod, respecting their Formula, had no reference to any political measures whatever." The Lord Advocate\* having found, from a full investigation of the business, that the synod had been grievously slandered, cheerfully consented to become their counsel; and a reclaiming petition, drawn up by his Lordship, was presented to the court.

When the Lords of Session were about to deliver their opinions on this petition, and on the answers which had been prepared by the opposite party, the Lord Advocate considered it to be his duty to repel the calumnies which had been raised against the synod, and their adherents, by addressing the court in the following language:—

"Before your Lordships enter on the consideration of this cause, I think it proper to trouble your Lordships with a few words respecting what has been said of the loyalty of those for whom I appear. And the opinion which I am now to deliver, I do not deliver as their counsel, but in my official character. I think it necessary I should deliver it in this character, from this circumstance particularly, that when this case came first under the consideration of the court, I was called on from the Bench, to attend to it as the public prosecutor. In this character, therefore, I think it my duty solemnly to declare that, from every thing which I have

\* Mr. Maconochie.

studied, and read, and investigated, with respect to the motives of those persons who brought forward and supported the proposed alterations in the Formula of the Associate synod, I have every reason to be satisfied with their loyalty, the loyalty of their Associate synod, and that of the great body of the people they represent. And this declaration I make, not from any application from those individuals who have taken the lead in this business, nor from any partiality to them as their counsel; but I think myself bound, in justice, to express, in this public manner, my deliberate and firm belief that their motives and conduct, and those of their brethren, in this religious controversy, have not had the most distant connection with disaffection to the constitution and government of this country; and I will add, that, so far from considering this matter as any obligation on me to look after those persons in their public conduct, it is my conviction that disloyalty, in matters of State, was, and is, as foreign to their minds and hearts, in the whole of this affair, as they can possibly be from the breasts of your Lordships at this present moment."

The synod highly approved of the conduct of those ministers who had thus stepped forward to vindicate, at their own risk, their brethren from the charge of disloyalty which had been so wantonly brought against them. They adopted the following resolution, as expressive of their sentiments upon the subject:—"The synod having always held sedition in abhorrence, and conscious of their loyalty to their king, and attachment to the civil constitution of their country, cannot hear without astonishment, that such a charge should have been brought against them by those who all along witnessed their proceedings, and never once objected to any part of said proceedings on that ground, till they thought proper to separate themselves; agreed in approving of the conduct of the ministers of Edinburgh and Glasgow, and others concurring with them, in coming forward for their vindication from so groundless a charge, in returning their warmest thanks to them for their brotherly services in said vindication; and resolve to bear with them the expenses which have been incurred by it, and to appoint a committee to watch over the cause till brought to a conclusion, in so far as respects the vindication of their character."

After the synod's committee had given to the Lords of Session all the information which they considered necessary for convincing them, that the decisions concerning the Formula had no connection whatever with politics, and after the above manly and honourable declaration had been made by the public prosecutor, completely acquitting the synod, both

to their Lordships and to the country, of any disloyal design, the committee considered that the object of their appointment had been gained; and they resolved, therefore, to withdraw from any farther concurrence in the process which was still carrying on respecting the property of the congregation at Kilpatrick.

One of the dignitaries of the National church took an ungenerous advantage of the disputes, which had been carried on concerning the Formula, in the Associate synod, to aim a deadly thrust at the character and usefulness of the ministers belonging to this section of the Secession. The dignitary who acted such an inglorious part, was Dr. William Porteous, one of the ministers of Glasgow. This officious person thought proper to write and publish a pamphlet, entitled, *The New Light Examined; or, Observations on the Proceedings of the Associate synod against their own Standards*. The object of this pamphleteer was to hold up the ministers of the synod to the scorn and indignation of their country, as a set of factious and designing men, who were alike destitute of religious principle and of patriotism. He represented them, not merely as abandoning the principles of their own church, and introducing dangerous innovations into the religious society with which they were connected, but as plotting the overthrow of the government, and subverting the very foundations of civil society. In so far as dark insinuations and indirect charges could go, he did what he could to rouse against them the jealousy, and to draw down upon them the vengeance, of the rulers of the country. If the leading men of the synod were not subjected to incarceration, or banished beyond seas to some of the plantations, it was certainly not the fault of the Rev. Dr. Porteous. I shall here insert from the pamphlet of this reckless writer, a few specimens of the bold statements that were made by him concerning the evil designs that were entertained by those able and enlightened men, who, at this period, took an active part in the proceedings of the Burgher Secession. After perusing them, the reader will be able to judge how far the individual who penned them was under the influence of that charity "which thinketh no evil."

Speaking of the proposed changes in the Formula, which the committee recommended to the synod to adopt, the pamphleteer charitably observed:—"Now they will have nothing in common with the Church of Scotland, not even her standards, which they themselves had subscribed, as the confession of their faith, which they were solemnly engaged to adhere to, and according to which they had bound all parents of their persuasion to educate their children. Now every

fence is to be pulled down by the daring hand of innovation, and every thing which promised stability to the cause of protestantism, is to be removed. We behold the doctrine, worship, discipline, and government of the famous Church of Scotland, set afloat on the stormy sea of the present times; and the Seceders,—the Burgher Seceders!—committing this frail bark to the variable winds of innovation, or the fierce tempest of infidelity.”\*

In the committee, which had been appointed to review the questions in the Formula, a discussion had taken place concerning the phraseology in which the question relating to the National covenants should be expressed. One party in the committee proposed to approve of these covenants, “as a solemn engagement, on the part of our fathers, to cleave to the *truths* of Christ, and to hand them down to succeeding generations.” Another party proposed to acknowledge the obligation of them, “as far as they respect a solemn engagement of adherence unto all the *truths and ordinances* of the Lord Jesus Christ, as contained in our Confession and Catechisms.” A considerable majority were in favour of adopting the first of these modes of expression.

On these proceedings of the committee, Dr. Porteous founded the following remarks:—“It is evident from this statement that the principal difference between the majority and the minority, in this committee, respected the word *ordinances*, as contained in our Confessions and Catechisms. It will not immediately occur, why there should be a debate, and a division of the committee, with respect to the admission of this word *ordinances*. It is therefore proper to remark, that in all our standards, the powers that are, are described as being *ordained* of God, and civil government as being the *ordinance* of God; this is their uniform language; and if the majority of the Associate synod had this in their eye, the rejecting of this word amounted to a declaration, that the authority of the powers that are, and that civil government itself, is not a matter of fundamental importance; but, on the contrary, is a matter of ‘doubtful disputation;’ and that a person denying the lawfulness of all civil government, may be admitted to ministerial communion with the Associate synod. Though such a man is wholly unqualified for social intercourse, and ought to be expelled from the society of *men*, yet he may be admitted to Christian fellowship and ministerial communion with the Associate synod!”†

In the overture of forbearance, the synod had declared, that “they wish to fear God and honour the king.” The Rev.

\* New Light Examined, p. 19.

† Ibid. p. 42.

Dr. Porteous found treason in these few words. "The meaning," said he, "of these words will be obvious to every man. They *wish* to honour the king: if they did honour him, they would not have expressed themselves in this manner; at least, any person of the most seditious principles may employ these terms."\*

An expression which occurred in the Preamble, viz. "The standard-books of this synod," excited no small horror and indignation in the bosom of Dr. Porteous, and drew forth from him the following rare specimen of malignant criticism:—"The expression, 'standard-books,' is new, and not very accurate; for the book is not the standard, but the doctrine contained in that book. It is comfortable, however, to learn, that they acknowledge any standard; and, from the whole history of this affair, we see clearly what they mean by their standard-books; not the Scriptures, but the Confession of Faith, the Larger Catechism, and the two covenants;—these are henceforth to be considered as the Confession of Faith *of this synod*, the Larger Catechism *of this synod*, the National Covenant *of this synod*, the Solemn League and Covenant *of this synod*. Every man will be sensible of the oddness and absurdity of these expressions; yet they have an important and dangerous meaning, which cannot now be mistaken. The doctrines contained in these books are no longer to be considered as fundamental articles of the Secession, as having been retained when they separated from the Church of Scotland, to be made the basis of a new association. In that case, they could neither be abrogated, altered, or explained, but by the authority which made them obligatory, which existed prior to the existence of this synod. But, by representing these standards as their own, they claimed the privilege of extending, limiting, and fashioning them as they please, as their religious views or political creed may direct. Indeed, their whole reasoning goes to this conclusion, that these standards are not fundamental articles of confederation; for such articles cannot be altered without the dissolution of the society. Nor are they standards; for a standard that may be varied at pleasure, is nonsense; or, if it has any meaning, it is this, that the Associate synod, as lords of conscience, can alter the fundamental articles of the Secession; to-day they may admit Democrats (democrats?), and to-morrow, atheists. The people are not considered as having any interest in the standards of the synod. They must either go along with the synod, and abandon the principles of that very society which they composed and constituted, and which they still support; or they

\* New Light Examined, p. 34.

must abandon the synod, and adhere to their own established principles.”\*

This libeller of the Associate synod was not permitted to pass unanswered and unchastised. The defence of the synod was undertaken by Mr. James Peddie,† one of the Secession ministers in Edinburgh. He published a pamphlet, in reply to Dr. Porteous, entitled, *A Defence of the Associate synod against the charge of Sedition: Addressed to William Porteous, D.D.* For dignified reproof, caustic severity, for pointed and lucid statement, and for a thorough exposure of blundering and sophistical reasoning, this pamphlet stands almost unrivalled in the annals of controversial warfare. The castigation which Mr. Peddie inflicted on his opponent, was administered with the hand of a master, and must have been felt, by the subject of it, to be dreadfully severe. But it was not more severe than merited. Such lessons of severity are occasionally necessary, to teach men the folly and danger of interfering (as was the case in the present instance) in matters with which they have nothing to do.

Having presented the reader with a few specimens of the malevolent charges which were brought by Dr. Porteous against the synod, for the purpose of destroying their character and usefulness, I shall here quote the reply which Mr. Peddie gave to the Doctor's learned criticism on the expression above mentioned, “The standard-books of this synod.”

“You enliven your remarks on the manner in which we speak of our standards, with observations truly ingenious. These are partly grammatical, and partly moral. You ought, in pity to us, as a synod of illiterate men, to have spared your grammatical remarks on our style. It may be, since *you* say it, that the expression, ‘standard-books,’ ‘is new, and not very accurate;’ and we acknowledge that we stand not so high in the literary world, as to have a right to coin new phrases, even for our own use. We had proceeded on the supposition, that ‘standard-books’ was as classical an expression as standard-gold, standard-silver, standard-weights, standard-measures, which occur in good authors; and our heads were not so full of metaphysics, as to be able to see how, if the *books* are our standards, as you allow, it was inaccurate to call them our standard-*books*. But surely, Sir, this remark was dictated by some nobler motive than the idle vanity of showing the Seceders, and the public, your grammatical skill. Was it your purpose to show that we are not true Seceders, not friends to legal establishments, not loyal citizens, because, in your opinion, we are not classical writers? Or did it pro-

\* New Light Examined, pp. 48, 49.

† Now Dr. Peddie.

ceed merely from an impotence of resentment, which induced you to persecute our very grammar?

"I would have disdained to take any notice of this little, absurd, malevolent criticism, had it not been for remarks of another kind which you have connected with it. You sagely remark, that 'the book is not the standard, but the doctrine contained in that book.' Pray, whether do you mean, by saying that 'the book is not the standard,' to contradict yourself, whose current language it is to style these books *our standards*, or us who have presumed to style them *our standard-books*? I deplore the case of the Seceders: you will gag them most effectually; for you reprobate their language as inaccurate, and, after you set them right, you will not permit them to adopt your own.

"We thank you, Sir, for the information, that 'the *book* is not the standard, but the *doctrine* contained in that book.' Seceders, especially those of the modern stamp, are a stupid and superstitious race! They have an excessive and absurd veneration for their standards! They always thought, till you undeceived them, that the *book*, as distinguished from the doctrine which it contains, that is to say, the paper of the book, the characters of the book, not the doctrine taught by these characters impressed on that paper, was the standard! But 'a standard which may be varied at pleasure,' you assure us, 'is nonsense;' and as the doctrine contained in the Confession may be expressed in characters of various size, on paper of various fineness, and on pages of various lengths, we shall henceforth endeavour not to confound the book with the doctrines contained in that book!!!

"It is pleasant to observe how you coil your arguments about us, and with serpentine agility twist and untwist it, in the hope of crushing your ignoble prey. We have, according to you, too much, and, at the same time, too little attachment to the Confession of Faith. Now, we renounce it altogether; anon, we substitute it in the place of our Bible; and we are made by you to do the one or the other, as it suits your purpose. That you have charged us with renouncing it every reader of your pamphlet knows; yet, with strange inconsistency, you charge us with making this book, which you say we have rejected, the ground and reason of our faith; for you say, 'we see clearly what they mean by their standard-books,—not the Scriptures,—but the Confession of Faith, the Larger Catechism, and the two Covenants.' Is this, Sir, or the sarcastic compliment which precedes it, worthy a man of your years and station? Is it so praiseworthy to attack the Seceders, that absurdity and self-contradiction will be justified by the patriotism of the design?

or must we consider you in these opposite remarks as equally sincere or insincere?

"You add, that 'a standard that may be varied *at pleasure* is nonsense.' Yes, Sir, it is nonsense, if by 'at pleasure,' you mean the pleasure of every private individual of a society; but if by it you mean the pleasure of the society of which he is a member, it is sound sense. A standard is what is appointed by the community to regulate the conduct of individuals in those matters of which it is the standard; the private individual is not at liberty to employ lighter weights or smaller measures than the standard; nor to believe differently from the standard-*book*. But the authority which appointed the standard, has right to alter it; and, in fact, the standard in coin, in weights, in measures, has in all countries undergone alterations: Yea, in the reformed Church of Scotland herself, the standard has been altered; or if you say it has not, pray tell me where were her standards before the year 1647, when she adopted the Westminster Confession? Yet I will not be so unjust to her as to say, what you have said of the Associate synod; that her Assemblies, 1647—8, 'as lords of the conscience, altered the fundamental articles' of the Church of Scotland."\*

Mr. Peddie concluded his reply to the Rev. Dr. Porteous in the following terms:—"Sir, I am but a young man compared with you; yet permit me, before I conclude, to give you one advice. If you be that real friend to your king and the constitution which you profess, never hereafter attempt to serve them, either by going out of your own proper sphere, or by bringing charges of disloyalty against those who are, in every respect, as good citizens as yourself. You may please yourself with the idea that, in thus collecting and publishing the suspicions of your own mind, you are recommending yourself to those in power, and doing essential service to your country. But in fact you do it, as well as yourself, extensive and serious injury. The more your charges obtain credit, the greater is the injury you do; for if you once deprive men of their reputation, you take from them one principal guard of their virtue; and the resistance to temptation is commonly weak when there is no character to be lost by compliance. And should you succeed in persuading the world that the Burgher Secession are a body of seditious men, you will not only sour their tempers against a country which is unjust to them, but would take away almost every worldly motive to continue the loyal and dutiful people which they have heretofore been. \* \* \* I have treated you with freedom, per-

\* A Defence of the Associate Synod, &c. p. 48, &c.

haps with asperity ; but when I meet with a fair and honourable adversary, I promise him very different usage. This is my apology : You have attacked the religion, the loyalty, the common sense of my brethren and myself. You have attempted to ruin us, our families, and our flocks ; to deprive us of character, of liberty, yea, of life. How could I speak smoothly to such a man ! When I saw the title of your pamphlet, I pronounced on its merits. I was never yet mistaken in my conclusion, that when an adversary, or his sentiments, are nicknamed in the title-page, what follows it is low and contemptible stuff.”\*

As the expression in the Preamble, “ Compulsory measures in religion,” had been misunderstood and misinterpreted, the synod, at their meeting in September 1800, agreed to insert in their minutes the following statement explanatory of their views, with regard to the power of the civil magistrate :— “ That it is the duty of the Christian magistrate to be a praise to them that do well, and a terror to evil-doers, such as contemptuous profaners of the holy name and Sabbath of the Lord, and perjured persons, as disturbers of the peace and good order of society.” They also appointed a committee to write a friendly letter to the separating brethren, stating to them the mischievous consequences of division in the church of Christ, the unwarrantableness of their present conduct, and inviting them to a friendly conference with the members of those presbyteries, where they might reside, to see if any expedient could be devised for effecting a re-union.

The committee appointed to correspond with the separating brethren reported, in April 1801, that they had written a letter to each of these brethren ; but that none of them had returned an answer, with the exception of Messrs. Watson and Taylor. The synod agreed to proceed no farther in the business, until the letter sent by their committee should be acknowledged by the rest of the brethren.

In the month of September, 1805, the brethren, who had withdrawn from the synod, found that their number had increased by ordinations and accessions to fifteen ; and they resolved to constitute themselves into a synod, under the designation of “ The Associate synod :” but that they might not be confounded with the ecclesiastical judicatory from which they had separated, they have ordinarily been known by the distinctive appellation of “ The Original Burgher synod.” The party who left the synod was so small, and the influence of those who composed it was so inconsiderable, that no serious loss was sustained by their departure. Men of unpreju-

\* Defence of the Associate Synod, pp. 76, 77.

diced minds were at a loss to find on what ground this separation had taken place. Though the separatists declaimed loudly against the synod, for having abandoned their original principles as Seceders, yet there were few persons in the country so clear-sighted as to be able to discover wherein the change of principle consisted. It is now a matter of history, that when an investigation was made into the truth of this allegation, before the highest law tribunals of the country, it was declared from the Bench, after a long and patient hearing of the two contending parties, that there was not the slightest foundation for such a charge being advanced.

The decision, to which a reference has now been made, deserves a place in this record, both on account of the connexion which it has with this portion of the Secession history, and also because it shows what was the opinion entertained, by neutral persons, concerning the conduct of those brethren who renounced the communion of the synod. It was declared that they had left the church to which they belonged *without any assignable cause, and without any fault on the part of the synod.*

Mr. John Jervie, and his colleague Mr. Jedidiah Aikman, ministers of the Burgher Associate congregation in Perth, espoused opposite sides in this controversy; and when the separation above-mentioned took place, Mr. Jervie renounced his connexion with the synod, while Mr. Aikman continued firm in his adherence. The congregation were divided in sentiment as well as the ministers. One portion went along with Mr. Jervie, while another portion held the same views as Mr. Aikman; but each party claimed the property of the congregation as its own. An appeal to the courts of law was the consequence. A long and expensive litigation ensued. The determination of the question was regarded with considerable anxiety by the synods, to which the contending parties severally belonged; for upon the issue of this process depended the property of other congregations, besides that of Perth. The grand object of those who had left the synod was to show, that the synod (and of course the party adhering to it), by adopting the Preamble, had abandoned the original principles of the Secession Church, while they themselves still continued to maintain their original ground; and that, of course, they were entitled to the exclusive possession of the place of worship, seeing that it was built and upheld for the maintenance of these principles. It was upon this point, that the ultimate decision of the question was made to depend. For when the process was carried by appeal before the House of Lords, this was the principle laid down by Lord Chancellor Eldon, as the ground on which judgment ought to be pro-

nounced; but as it had not been made evident to their Lordships, that the synod had abandoned any of the principles hitherto maintained by the Secession Church, it was remitted back to the Court of Session, to get this point ascertained.

Upon this single point, then, both parties concentrated their strength before a tribunal, the members of which could not be supposed to entertain the slightest partiality in favour of either. Every effort of learned ingenuity and of legal argumentation was put forth by the pursuers (or Old Light\* party) to show, that the synod had moved away from the ground which their predecessors in the Secession had always occupied. Their failure was complete. So far from being able to establish, to the satisfaction of the Lords of Session, the truth of the allegation, which they had so confidently advanced, their Lordships were convinced by the arguments of the opposite party, that no change of principle had taken place; and they gave their decision accordingly. After the usual quantity of answers, replies, and duplies, had been given, the court pronounced the following interlocutor:—

“*Edinburgh, February 18, 1815.*—The Lords having resumed consideration of the petition, with condescendence, answers, replies, duplies, and whole cause, Find, That the pursuers, James Craigdallie and Others, have failed to condescend upon any acts done, or opinions professed, by the Associate synod, or by the defenders, Jedidiah Aikman and Others, from which the court, so far as they are capable of understanding the subject, can infer, much less find, that the said defenders have deviated from the principles and standards of the Associate presbytery and synod. Further find, That the pursuers have failed in rendering intelligible to the Court on what grounds it is that they aver that there does at this moment exist any real difference between their principles and those of the defenders; for the Lords further find, That the Act of Forbearance, as it is termed, on which the pursuers found, as proving the apostacy of the defenders from the original principles of the Secession, and the new Formula, never were adopted by the defenders, but were either rejected or dismissed as inexpedient, and that the Preamble to the Formula, which was adopted by the Associate synod in the year 1797, is substantially and almost *verbatim* the same as the explication, which the pursuers proposed in their petition of 13th April, 1797, to be prefixed to the Formula, and to which, if it would satisfy their brethren, they declared that

\* This phrase is used without the slightest disrespect; it is employed merely as a distinctive appellation, this being the designation by which that section of the Secession Church is ordinarily known.

they were willing to agree : Therefore, on the whole, find it to be unnecessary now to enter into any of the inquiries ordered by the House of Lords, under the supposition that the defenders had departed from the original standards and principles of the Association, and that the pursuers must be considered merely as so many individuals who have thought proper voluntarily to separate from the congregation to which they belonged, without any assignable cause, and without any fault on the part of the defenders, and therefore, have no right to disturb the defenders in the possession of the place of worship originally built for the profession of principles from which the pursuers have not shown that the defenders have deviated ; therefore sustain the defences and assoilzie ; and in the counter-action of declarator, at the instance of the defender Jedidiah Aikman and Others, decern and declare in terms of the libel, but find no expenses due to either party.

“ Signed 21st February, 1815.”      “ C. HOPE, *I.P.D.*”

The history of that small section of the Secession, who formed themselves into a separate synod, in the circumstances now detailed, presents little that is interesting. Until of late, they have not occupied a prominent place in the public eye. After the keen spirit of testimony-bearing, with which they were, at the commencement, strongly impregnated, cooled down into the temperate degree, they pursued the tenor of their way with little noise or ostentation.

Soon after they had constituted themselves into a synod, they republished the “ Act, Declaration, and Testimony ” of the Secession Church ; and being grieved in heart at the conduct of their former brethren, in retaining the Preamble, they were pleased to “ acknowledge, declare, and assert ” their adherence to the original Testimony “ in opposition to every part of this new scheme.” They also published, in a separate pamphlet, an Appendix to the Testimony, containing “ A Narrative of the origin, progress, and consequences of late innovations in the Secession ; with a Continuation of that Testimony to the present times.” The “ Narrative ” gives an affecting description of the manifold evils resulting from the “ new scheme,” and places in a captivating light, the purity and fidelity of those few brethren who had the honesty to leave the synod, and the courage to step forward and lift up the fallen Testimony, when it was in danger of being completely trampled under foot. The “ Continuation ” of the Testimony consists chiefly of a series of condemnatory sentences pronounced upon almost all the sections of the Christian church in this land ; so that no person desirous to

maintain a good conscience, could safely be connected with any one of them.

It may be edifying to the members of the Established Church to know the opinion that was entertained of them (as a church) about thirty years ago, by those who are now their fondest admirers, and most active auxiliaries. The opinion which the Original Burghers entertained of their brethren in the Establishment, at the period when the "Continuation" was penned, was sufficiently low. In this document we find the following account given of the state of the National church:—"Error in doctrine, and oppression in ecclesiastical administration, constituted the leading evils which drove the first Seceders from the bosom of the church, and drew forth their Act, Declaration, and Testimony, in their defence. Since that period, the proceedings of the ruling party in the General Assembly *have greatly increased the list of grievances*; the friends of truth and of principle are held in derision, and those who preach the gospel in purity, display a most stumbling conformity in co-operating with the enemies of the cross." "Instead of learning from experience the many evils originating from the law of patronage, or taking measures to have the liberties of the Christian people, in this great concern, restored to them, the General Assembly have lent their aid in its support, and in defiance of all the complaints against it, and opposition to it, by reclaiming parishes. And even where the opposition has been most general, *the farce of moderating a call* has been uniformly acted by the presbyteries to whom such parishes belonged."\*

A few years ago, an attempt was made to effect a union between the Original Burgher and Original Anti-burgher sections of the Secession. A correspondence was opened between the synods of these two denominations; committees were appointed, and conferences took place with a view to arrange the terms of the union. But after some time spent in fruitless negotiation, neither party were inclined to renounce their particular views on the original points of difference, and the idea of accomplishing a union was given up. The Original Burghers, however, have of late years become much enamoured of the National church, and have made a formal proposal to be received into its communion. The proposal has been favourably entertained by the General Assembly. A committee appointed by the Original Burgher synod, has held conferences with a committee of the Assembly, to discuss the terms of a union; and according to the reports given, from time to time, by the convener of the Assembly's

\* Appendix, pp. 101, 103.

committee, these conferences have been conducted in an amicable spirit. At the last meeting of the General Assembly (May, 1838), a motion was made and agreed to, that a committee be appointed to prepare an overture, authorizing a union betwixt the National church and the members of the Original Burgher synod. An overture to this effect has been prepared and transmitted to presbyteries for consideration, that they may either approve of, or reject it. So far as the discussions of these local judicatories have been made public, the overture has met with a favourable reception; and there is every probability that it will be sanctioned by a large majority of them.

The Original Burgher synod, at their meeting in the month of May (1838), agreed, by a considerable majority, to delay coming to a final resolution on the subject of the proposed union, till their next meeting; that, during the interval, the presbyteries and sessions connected with their association, may have the whole documents under consideration, and may be prepared to state "how far the terms finally obtained from the General Assembly are satisfactory." Along with this resolution to delay, the synod embodied the following declaration:—"It being understood, that, in case they shall decide in favour of reunion, on the basis of the General Assembly's overture, the synod shall, preparatory to the union, subscribe a bond, pledging itself, by the use of every constitutional liberty secured to it, to follow out the design of its testimony, and the cause of reformation sworn to in our national covenants." Against this decision of the synod, in favour of delay, thirteen ministers and several elders protested, and reserved to themselves full liberty to act in this matter as they shall see cause.

Whether the mass of the people, connected with the Original Burghers, shall be equally willing, with their ministers, to return to the bosom of the National church, is a question which remains to be decided. That a portion of them will acquiesce in the proposed union, is certain; but that a considerable proportion of them will, in spite of the blandishments of national endowments, continue to adhere to the original Testimony of the Secession Church, is more than probable. It is difficult to perceive on what grounds the members of a church, who have all along professed a more than ordinary attachment to the Secession Testimony, can consistently connect themselves with the Establishment, seeing that all the evils are still to be found in it, against which they have hitherto been testifying. Error in doctrine, the existence of the law of patronage, relaxation of discipline, and oppression in ecclesiastical administration, constituted the chief grounds on which the Secession originally took place. And has any one of these

grounds been removed? That erroneous doctrine, of the pernicious description, is taught in many of the pulpits of the National church, is admitted both by churchman and dissenter. The law of patronage also still exists. When a motion was brought forward in the General Assembly, about two years ago, to declare patronage a grievance, and to adopt measures for the removal of it, the motion was rejected by a large majority. The right of the Christian people to choose their own ministers, was scouted by the speakers belonging to the two antagonist parties in the Assembly. Not one individual in the House could be found to advocate the cause of popular election. On the contrary, it was publicly declared, that popular election, should it be granted, would prove a curse to the Church of Scotland. This declaration was made, not by one of the *moderate* party, but by one of the chief speakers on what is ordinarily termed the *popular* or *evangelical* side of the House. No one, who attends to the state of ecclesiastical discipline in the Established Church, will affirm, that it has of late years undergone any perceptible improvement. A case of refusal of admission to the table of the Lord, or an instance of suspension or expulsion from communion, on account of the grossest immorality, is but of rare occurrence. Sealing ordinances are indiscriminately dispensed to persons of all characters, and of all grades of opinion. The chief term of discipleship is, that the person applying for privileges be resident within the bounds of the parish, and express his willingness to be connected, by a nominal tie, with the National church. How can the state of discipline in the Establishment be otherwise, when, according to one of their own writers, there are men occupying her pulpits, "who preach Socinian, or Pelagian, or Arminian heresies, while they subscribe a Calvinistic creed."\* Again, with regard to mal-administration, have we not seen several instances occur, even within the short period since the *veto* act was passed, of ministers being intruded into parishes, in opposition to the expressed wishes of a decided majority of the parishioners?† The above statements show, that, though there may be a disposition manifested, in some particulars, to accommodate measures to existing circumstances, owing to the great excitement of the times, yet the general principles on which the administration of affairs is conducted in the supreme judicatory of the National church, continue the same as ever they were. They are intolerant in their nature, oppressive in their operation, and decidedly hostile to the rights of the Christian people.

See Synod Sermon by the Rev. Dr. Burns of Paisley

† The cases here specially referred to, are those of Dreghorn, Trinity-Gask, Pron, and Eskdale-muir.

On what ground, then, can those congregations, connected with the Original Burgher synod, join the Established Church, so as to become with them one ecclesiastical body? They can do so consistently only on one ground, and that is, by avowedly "dropping" the whole Secession Testimony, which they and their forefathers have hitherto held, and by submitting unconditionally to the supreme authority of the dominant church, identifying themselves with all its errors, corruptions, and abuses. And is it really come to this with any section of the Secession Church? Are they prepared to make an unconditional surrender of those principles, for which, as Seceders, they have hitherto been contending? Are they prepared to sanction, by a union, those evils against which they have so long and so loudly been testifying? Were it not for the fraternal embraces which have already passed between the contracting parties, and the high eulogiums which they have been pronouncing on each other's excellencies, I would have considered an affirmative answer to these questions as altogether beyond the range of probability.

But then it is affirmed, that the Original Burgher synod have "agreed to subscribe a bond" preparatory to the union, pledging itself "to follow out (after the union has taken place) the design of its testimony, and the cause of reformation sworn to in our national covenants." It will certainly be a singular way of "following out the design of their testimony," and of promoting the cause of reformation, to join the communion of a church, where, it is admitted, errors and corruptions abound, and where the obligations of the national covenants have about as much weight as the Koran itself. Subscribe a bond to follow out the design of their testimony in the bosom of the national church! No idea can be more Quixotic than this. What will those men, who subscribe a Calvinistic creed, while they preach Socinian, Pelagian, or Arminian heresies—what will those men, who have denounced popular election as a curse, and who have publicly declared that patronage "is a part of the Establishment under which the people have enjoyed so many blessings,"\*—what will such men as these care for the *testifying* of their new auxiliaries? They will laugh it to scorn.

But, even admitting that they will be permitted to follow out the design of their testimony, without being subjected to censure or ridicule, will it be prudent or safe in them to expose themselves and their people to the contamination of Socinian, Pelagian, or Arminian heresies, by joining the fellowship of a

\* See Lord Moncrieff's speech on the patronage question, in the Assembly of 1836.

church, where such errors are tolerated? How can such conduct be reconciled with the apostolic injunction, "Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers; for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness?" "Wherefore, come ye out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord." Besides, will they not, by accomplishing such a union, come under the following sentence of condemnation, which they have pronounced in their Testimony against the evangelical ministers of the national church, when they affirm, that "those who preach the gospel in purity, display a *stumbling conformity*, in co-operating with the enemies of the cross." \* In "following out the design of their testimony," after they have entered the Establishment, it will be necessary either to expunge or to alter this part of their testimony-bearing; for should the sentence now quoted be permitted to stand in the new edition of the Testimony, the same as it is in the old, it will be constantly staring them in the face, and giving pain to their consciences, by recalling to their remembrance the language of the prophet Nathan, "*Thou art the man.*"

Whether the brief history of the Original Burgher synod shall terminate in the manner now contemplated, a short time will determine. I shall only add, in concluding this chapter, that should their history, as a distinct religious society, terminate in the manner proposed, it will indicate, on their part, a change of sentiment much greater than that of which they accused the Associate synod, when they withdrew from their communion; and, from the revolution which they are about to undergo, in passing from a state of Secession into a state of "stumbling conformity" with those against whom they have, from their earliest existence, "displayed the banner of a testimony," they may learn to exercise, for the future, a greater degree of charity in judging of the motives and actions of others, seeing that the step which they are about to take, will render a large demand on the charity of their fellow-men necessary, in judging of the purity of their motives. †

\* Continuation of the Testimony, p. 101.

† Since the publication of the first edition of this work, the union referred to, in the above chapter, has taken place. The Original Burgher synod has become extinct. By far the greater part of the brethren connected with that synod have joined the Establishment. There is a small minority who have not yet taken this step. Whether they will be induced to follow their brethren, who have entered within the pale of the national church, or connect themselves with some other religious denominations, or continue to exist as a "remnant" testifying against the defections of their former associates, as well as against the corruptions of other parties, remains yet to be decided.

## CHAPTER XVIII.

Mr. Mason of New York visits Scotland—Application made by him to Synod for preachers—Application favourably received—Several ministers accompany him to America—Articles of correspondence betwixt American Reformed Synod and Associate Synod—Alarm excited by invasion—Address to the King—Synod publish an address to their people—Petition to the Synod from managers of Royal Infirmary for aid—Liberal collections made—Letter of thanks from managers—Movement in favour of British and Foreign Bible Society—Scanty supply of students of divinity—Committee appointed on the subject—Overture concerning students—Reproof administered to students—Letter from Reformed Synod in America—Answer by the Synod—Petition from Halifax in Nova Scotia—Mr. Robson sent to Nova Scotia—Enlargement of Psalmody—Renewal of East India charter—Petition to Parliament about Missionaries—Termination of the war—Address to the Prince Regent—Day of thanksgiving—Overture about education—Overture rejected—Letter from moderator of Original Burgher Synod—Associate Synod's answer—Four ministers sent to Nova Scotia and Canada—Union of presbyterians in Nova Scotia—Union of Seceders in Ireland—Gaelic missions—Memorial presented to Synod on the subject—Committee appointed—Report on religious state of the Highlands—Sanctioned by Synod—Gaelic preachers trained up—Opposition made to Secession Missions in Highlands—Religious destitution in Highlands—Unjust complaint against dissenters—Death of Professor Lawson—His character—Rev. Dr. Dick elected Professor—Missions of Irish Secession Synod.

IN the summer of 1801, Mr. John Mason, minister at New York, and a member of the Associate Reformed synod of America, paid a visit to Scotland. One of the objects of his visit was to obtain a supply of preachers for the churches in America. He was welcomed by the Associate synod as a brother. They invited him to take a seat amongst them, as a corresponding member; and having received from him a statement of the principles and order of the Reformed synod, they agreed to recognise that society as a sister-church. They also pledged themselves to assist him, to the utmost of their power, in procuring the necessary supply of labourers for the transatlantic churches; and they appointed a committee to co-operate with him in accomplishing the object of his visit. When the synod called for the report of this committee, it was stated that the following persons had offered their services as transatlantic missionaries:—Messrs. James Scrimgeour and Robert Forrest, ministers; Mr. James Paterson, preacher; and Mr. Robert Bishop, student; and the following list was, at the same time, presented, of ministers, probationers, and students, to whom a recommendation was given to take into consideration the call given in provi-

dence, to go and promote the interests of the Redeemer's kingdom, by preaching the gospel in America, viz.—Messrs. Hugh Jamieson, Hector Cameron, George Campbell, Alexander Harper, John Leitch, David Inglis, John Cowper, William Taylor, John Ræe, John Jamieson, James Dick, James Thorburn, Robert Easton, and James Harrower, ministers; Messrs. Robert Blackadder, James Laurie, John Burns, William Gibson, George Young, George Wigton, David Paterson, Andrew Marshall, James Robson, and David Blackadder, probationers; and Messrs. Robert Moffat, Robert Hunter, James Paterson, junior, John Craig, Walter Dunlop, and Adam Thomson, students of divinity. In order to induce ministers and preachers to undertake this mission, it was declared, that should any of them be desirous of returning to their native country, after labouring for a few years in America, the synod would receive them with brotherly affection, and would assist in defraying the expenses of their journey homeward.

As several of these persons were in Edinburgh at the time the synod was holding its meeting, the committee conversed with them individually on the subject; and notice was sent to those who were not present, of their being nominated to this honourable work, with a request that they would take the matter into consideration, and return a definite answer to the committee, before the next meeting of synod. The result of this movement was, that when Mr. Mason sailed for America, in the beginning of September, 1802, he was accompanied by Messrs. James Scrimgeour, Robert Forrest, Robert Easton, Alexander Calderhead, Robert Bishop, and James Laurie.\* In the following year, Mr. John Burns, after receiving ordination in this country, sailed for the same destination.† Mr. James Paterson, probationer, who had offered his services, was prevented from fulfilling his benevolent intention, by falling into consumption, which brought him to an untimely grave. He was a young man of good talents, of an amiable disposition, and of high promise. Had it pleased God to spare him, he would have occupied an honourable place among the labourers in the American churches.

The synod, having agreed to recognise the Associate Re-

\* Mr. Scrimgeour had for some time laboured in the ministerial work at North Berwick; Mr. Forrest, at Saltcoats; Mr. Easton, at Morpeth; and Mr. Calderhead, at Horndean.

† In a letter which the synod received, some time after this, from America, it was mentioned, that Mr. Scrimgeour was settled in the town of Newburgh, seventy miles above New York; Mr. Forrest in New York; Mr. Easton in Montreal; Mr. Calderhead in the Presburgh of Monongahela; Mr. Bishop at Lexington, in the State of Kentucky; Mr. Laurie in Washington, the seat of government; and Mr. Burns at Niagara.

formed synod of America as a sister-church, resolved, as a means of promoting Christian affection between the two churches, to maintain a regular correspondence with their brethren in America. The following articles of union and correspondence were adopted by them, and transmitted to the American synod :—

1. That there shall be a regular transmission of the minutes of the several meetings of the two synods to one another.

2. That the transmission shall once a-year be accompanied with a judicial letter, containing such information respecting the state of religion in the congregations under their inspection as may be practicable and useful.

3. That the same faith shall be given mutually to testimonials from either of the corresponding churches to the other, that is usually given by the different parts of the same church to one another.

4. That the members of either synod, who shall occasionally be present at any of the meetings of said synod, or of the presbyteries in subordination to them, shall, on proper evidence of their character, be invited to act along with them, as corresponding members.

5. That the Associate synod shall, from time to time, according to their ability, and as the circumstances of the Reformed Church may require, do every thing that is competent to them, to furnish them with a supply of ministers and probationers, to preach the gospel under their inspection.

Some time after this, a communication was received from the Reformed synod of America, declaring the happiness which they felt in being recognised by their Scottish brethren as a sister-church; stating also their formal recognition of the synod in this relation, and expressing their gratitude for the supply of ministers and preachers which had been sent, and their entire acquiescence in the articles of correspondence which had been proposed.

In the course of this narrative, ample proof has already been afforded of the spirit of loyalty which has animated the Secession, at the different epochs of its history. While it has uniformly thrown its influence into the scale of rational and enlightened freedom, and vindicated the rights of conscience, it has ever been among the most forward in manifesting its attachment to the throne, and in declaring its resolution to support the civil institutions of the country. The charge of disaffection to government, which has been repeatedly preferred against its members (in common with other dissenting societies), by interested and designing individuals, is one which has been belied by the whole course of its history. The conduct of the Associate synod, at the close of the last

century, and at the beginning of the present, when this country was shaken with internal commotion, and threatened with foreign invasion, furnishes additional evidence in support of the statements that have now been made.

A motion was brought forward in the synod, on the 26th of April, 1798, to present an address to his Majesty, "on the present critical state of the nation, as threatened with invasion by the power of France." This motion was carried almost unanimously, only two ministers and three elders voting against it; and the ground on which these persons opposed the motion, was, that they considered it incompetent for the synod, as an ecclesiastical court, to adopt such a measure; while, at the same time, they declared their loyalty to the King, and their attachment to the civil constitution of their country. Mr. James Black, one of the opponents of the motion, craved to have his opinion recorded; and the following declaration, made by him, will show what were the sentiments which he, and those who acted along with him, entertained on this subject:—

"I hereby declare, That, while I, as a subject, wish to maintain all loyal affection to our King, and to seek the safety and prosperity of our native land, yet I find myself called upon, in this manner, to testify my disapprobation of this synod's entering into any discussion respecting an address, to our King, in their religious capacity; because I view it contrary to the spiritual nature of Christ. And I hereby also declare, that this disapprobation is, in no respect, to be understood as interfering with what the members of this synod ought to do in their civil capacity.

"JAMES BLACK."

The address which the synod presented on this occasion, breathed the very essence of loyalty. I much question if a warmer effusion ever proceeded from the General Assembly itself, even in those halcyon days when the golden links which bind the altar to the throne, were much more firmly rivetted than they are at present. Those persons who have hitherto been accustomed to regard all dissenting communities as hotbeds of sedition, and nurseries of revolutionists, will be both astonished and gratified to find such an address as the following proceeding from a society of humble dissenters; and, after perusing it, they will cordially acquiesce in the opinion, that neither the sentiments which it contains, nor the language in which these sentiments are expressed, would have done discredit to the Episcopal Bench. It is here inserted for the purpose of showing, that, notwithstanding the strong incentives to loyalty, which the ministers of established churches are sup-

posed to have, a spirit of loyal attachment to the throne has by no means been monopolized by them in times past.

“ To the King’s most excellent Majesty, the humble address of the ministers and elders, in their synod assembled, of that body of dissenters from the Church of Scotland, commonly called Burgher Seceders. May it please your Majesty,

“ We, your Majesty’s very loyal and dutiful subjects, the members of the Associate synod of presbyterian dissenters, deeply sensible of the blessings of a constitution which secures to all their civil and religious rights, and of the virtues of a sovereign, who, for so many years, has been an example to his people, can no longer contemplate in silence those awful dispensations of providence, under which so many governments have been shaken and overturned, and a great military power raised in the centre of Europe, which, after menacing conquest and revolution to all around it, now seems to direct its concentrated animosity and violence against these realms, threatening with final ruin all that has been there accumulated by the efforts of ages, for the comfort and well-being of man ; and, at the same time, labouring insidiously to unnerve their inhabitants, by disseminating and promoting dissatisfaction with your Majesty, aversion to the constitution, and hostility to the faith of the gospel.

“ At such an eventful period, we beg leave to lay at the foot of your Majesty’s throne, our humble assurances that we will unite in the general effort which the nation must now make for preserving its existence ; and that we will, in the congregations under our pastoral charge, zealously use that influence which, under the mild and equal laws of our country, we enjoy, to arouse them to a sense of their present danger and duty, and recall to their remembrance the examples of attachment to the illustrious House of Hanover, which their fathers in the Secession have shown in former critical emergencies ; and, while we call upon them to look to that God, who holds in his hand the destiny of nations, and to trust in his gracious and superintending providence, we will urge them to act like men who have to contend for all that is dear to them, and to preserve from formidable and inveterate foes, themselves, their families, their possessions, and those invaluable institutions which, according to their respective natures, have proved the sources of civil liberty here, and we trust, the means of eternal salvation hereafter.

“ We humbly beseech your Majesty to accept these assurances of our constant and inviolable fidelity, of our abhorrence of every traitorous conspiracy, as contrary to the Holy Scriptures, and our avowed principles ; and of our sincere and fixed

resolution to exhort all within the sphere of our influence, to persevere in their duty and allegiance.

“Sire, we will not cease to pray, that the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may encompass your Majesty, as with a shield; that he may abundantly bless your Majesty’s royal Consort, the Prince and Princess of Wales, and all the royal family; that he may sanctify to all your subjects the present alarming dispensations of heaven; and that he may crown with success the exertions of your Majesty’s navy and army, for securing us from invasion, and thus laying a foundation for your Majesty’s negotiating an honourable peace.

“Signed in our name, and in our presence, and by our appointment, at Edinburgh, the 27th day of April, 1798.

“JOHN JAMIESON, *Moderator*.”

At the commencement of 1803, a considerable sensation was excited throughout the country, in consequence of the discovery of a plot, in which Colonel Despard and other individuals were engaged, to assassinate the king, and overturn the government. Both houses of parliament, and other public bodies throughout the empire, presented addresses to the king, congratulating him on his escape. At their first meeting, after the discovery of this plot, the synod united with their countrymen, in expressing their attachment to his Majesty’s person and government, by presenting to him a loyal address.

This same year, the country was thrown into a state of great alarm, in consequence of Bonaparte having renewed his threats of invasion, which had been suspended by the short peace of Amiens. Formidable armaments were assembled on the shores opposite Great Britain, and nothing seemed to be wanting but a favourable opportunity for carrying the intended descent into execution. The danger was considered to be imminent; and, at such a crisis, the energetic co-operation of all classes was imperiously required to repel the enemy, should he actually venture upon such a hazardous undertaking. Every exertion was made by those who possessed influence, to rouse the patriotism of the country, and to prepare the inhabitants for courageously encountering the impending evil. The members of the Associate synod showed the interest which they took in the welfare of their country, and their anxiety to defend and maintain its institutions, by adopting such measures as were competent to them, as an ecclesiastical court, in order to stir up the people under their charge to co-operate with their fellow-citizens in repelling any aggression that might be made by a foreign foe. They appointed a day of humiliation to be observed in all their congregations, “on account of the threat-

ening aspect of providence toward our country, in the preparations making by our enemies for invading us." They also appointed a committee to prepare a short pastoral address to the people, on the subject of the threatened invasion, representing to them their duty in the present emergency. The following is the spirited address which the committee prepared. After being approved of by the synod, several hundred copies of it were printed and circulated among their congregations:—

"DEARLY BELOVED BRETHREN,

"In the course of divine providence, these kingdoms are again involved in the calamities of war, and are contending for their existence against an ambitious and overgrown power, which has subdued or humbled the other nations of Europe. We deem it fit, in the exercise of our pastoral care, to call on you to consider seriously the important duties which you are required, by this awful dispensation, to perform. Under this impression, we have resolved to embrace an early opportunity of assembling with our several congregations, to humble ourselves before God, to supplicate his mercy, to deprecate impending judgments, and to beseech him that he would speedily turn war into peace to the ends of the earth.

"Brethren! our enemy, while he is practised in all the arts of cruelty and deceit, is daring in enterprise, brave and skilful in war; and the iron despotism of his government favours him in the secrecy of his designs, and the suddenness of their execution. Envious of our prosperity, and regarding us with malignant jealousy, as the chief obstacle to his scheme of aggrandisement and dominion, he comes to overthrow our constitution, and destroy our commerce, to plunder our wealth, and to reduce us to a state of abject dependence on his imperious will. In the ruin of our civil privileges, our religion, which is dearer to us than them all, would be involved; for that man, by turns an infidel, a Mohammedan, and a Roman Catholic, has avowed, in the face of the sun, his contempt of all religion, and wishes to establish an uncontrolled jurisdiction over the consciences, as well as the bodies of men.

"To provide for those of his own household, and by consequence to defend them, is a duty which our religion enjoins upon every man who possesses it. A nation is a society of families, united for mutual security and comfort. It is, therefore, not less incumbent upon us as Christians, than as men, to join together for the defence of our country, and of those manifold privileges, civil and religious, which a free constitution has transmitted, through past generations, in a degree of unrivalled excellence.

"The country, which is now in danger, is endeared to us

as the land of our nativity, and the depository of the ashes of our fathers and our kindred. It is hallowed by the ordinances of our God, and is become venerable in our eyes, as the place in which we have received spiritual blessings, the earnest and the foretaste of the happiness of heaven. Brethren ! could you endure to behold such a country invaded and laid desolate by the insulting foe, while you possess the means of repelling the aggression ? As dissenters, you enjoy the most valuable privileges, under the mild and equitable law of toleration ; and are you not ready to testify your gratitude, by contributing to the defence of that excellent government by which they are secured ? It is known to many of you, that your fathers in the Secession church distinguished themselves in a former national struggle, by their loyalty and their courage ; and we trust that you will convince the world that you are worthy to inherit their name, and to occupy their post of honour.

“ We exhort and beseech you to stand fast in the evil day ; to quit, yourselves like men, and to be strong. Expect not that, in answer to your prayers for protection and deliverance, miracles will be wrought. It is your duty, in humble dependence upon the Almighty, to employ the human means of defence with which you are provided, and to look for his blessing on your vigorous exertions ; and never were men called upon to think more seriously on the deep stake which depends on the issue of the contest. We must shield from destruction that venerable fabric which our fathers formed by their wisdom, and cemented with their blood. We must even struggle for our existence, as a nation, and as individuals, against a foe whose progress has been hitherto marked with murder and desolation. Interest, patriotism, religion, command us to resist, even unto blood, in this mighty conflict.

“ Are you resolved to obey this command ? Let the fear of God, and confidence in his protection, give solemnity to this resolution. Life is not to be exposed or assaulted with light or frivolous feeling. In every age, the most devout men have been the bravest soldiers ; and still ‘ the people that know their God, will be strong, and do exploits.’ The faith of the gospel, and the hope of immortality, will inspire you with invincible courage, and prepare you for the worst. Then, ‘ if you live, you will live unto the Lord ; if you die, you will die unto the Lord ; and whether living or dying, you will be the Lord’s !’

“ Finally, brethren, let us trust in the Lord our God, and continue instant in prayer. His perfections and his promises assure us of what he is able and willing to do for those who rely on his mercy and his power ; and the frequent interposi-

tions of his providence, in behalf of our country, encourage us to hope that he will yet stretch out his arm for our salvation. 'Our fathers trusted in God; they trusted, and he did deliver them. They cried unto him, and were delivered; they trusted in him, and were not confounded.' Let their children say, 'God is our refuge and our strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore, will not we fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea; though the waters thereof roar and be troubled, though the mountains shake with the swelling thereof. There is a river, the streams whereof shall make glad the city of God, the holy place of the tabernacles of the Most High. God is in the midst of her, she shall not be moved; God shall help her, and that right early.'"

Such were the sentiments that animated the members of the Associate synod at this crisis. A letter having been received by them, during the course of this year, from the Associate Reformed synod of America, the answer which was returned, contained the following reference to the state of matters at home:—"Some of our congregations are considerably affected by the stagnation of trade and manufactures, and other evils which have followed the renewal of hostilities with France. But it is no small consolation, that we are perfectly joined together in one mind, with respect to the necessity of supporting the government of our country in this alarming crisis, and of employing the means of defence with which providence hath furnished us. We are confident that you will cordially unite with us, in praying that peace may dwell in our land. If an invasion shall be attempted, we trust that the loyalty and patriotism of our people will not be less exemplary than on a former occasion, nearly sixty years ago, when, after the most strict scrutiny, it was found, to the honour of our church, that not one Seceder had joined the standard of rebellion.\* We will not be negligent to stir up the people committed to our charge, by putting them in remembrance of these things, though they know them, and be established in the present truth; and accordingly, we have appointed an early day to be set apart for solemn fasting and humiliation, in all our congregations, and have prepared a pastoral address, which is to be read from all our pulpits."

A petition was presented to the synod, in September, 1804, from the managers of the Royal Infirmary, in Edinburgh, craving that a collection might be made by the congregations under their inspection, for the benefit of that institution. This

\* See remarks made on the conduct of Seceders during the Rebellion of 1745, p. 207.

petition met with a most favourable reception. The synod agreed to record the high sense which they entertained of "the uncommon excellence and utility of that institution, not only as a means of cure and relief to many thousands of diseased, sick, and poor people, who resort to it from all parts of the kingdom, but as a practical school of surgery and medicine, happily attached to a theoretical one, from which not only the inhabitants of the united kingdoms of Britain and Ireland, but of Europe and the world, derive incalculable benefit." They further entered "unanimously, and with the utmost cheerfulness, into the object of the petition, embracing with much pleasure the opportunity which it presented, of doing whatever might be in their power to serve, by this means, the cause of humanity." They most earnestly recommended to all the sessions and congregations under their inspection, to make, as soon as possible, a public collection, or (where it might be judged more expedient), a private contribution for the Royal Infirmary. They ordered the petition which had been presented by the managers of that institution, and their own decision concerning it, to be printed and sent to every session in the Association, "that all might be duly informed of the nature and importance of the purpose for which they were required to contribute, and might be prepared to give liberally, as became men and Christians, for the relief of their suffering fellow-creatures." A copy of the synod's decision was sent to the managers of the Infirmary, and a committee was appointed to carry it into effect. The Rev. Dr. Davidson addressed to the committee the following letter, in reply to the communication which had been sent:—

"GENTLEMEN,

*Heriot Row, 22d October, 1804.*

"A copy of the minute of your synod, sent me by Mr. Lothian, containing their answer to the petition from the managers of the Royal Infirmary of Edinburgh, requesting their appointment of a collection for the benefit of the Infirmary, in all the congregations of your connexion, I had the honour of laying before the managers at last meeting.

"We could not fail to be gratified with the just sentiments which the synod entertained, respecting the extensive utility of the Hospital, with their very favourable answer to the petition, and with the handsome manner in which it is expressed. The minute of synod was ordered to be inserted in our own minutes: and I was requested, in the name of the managers, to convey to the synod, at their next meeting, through your means, our perfect approbation of the measures they have adopted, and our unanimous thanks for an enactment tending so essentially to promote the cause of humanity.

"It is with pleasure I have thus fulfilled the desire of my brethren in the management of the Infirmary; and I am, very respectfully, Gentlemen, your obedient humble servant,

"THOMAS DAVIDSON."

The result of this appeal to the congregations of the Secession, in behalf of the Edinburgh Infirmary, was highly

creditable to the liberality and public spirit of this section of the Secession church. In the course of twelve months, the sum of £834 1s. 1d. was paid into the funds of that benevolent institution.

A representation was, at the same time, made in favour of the British and Foreign Bible Society, which had newly sprung into existence. The synod expressed their "hearty approbation" of the object of this society, and their desire to co-operate in promoting it. But as they had so lately given a recommendation to the congregations under their inspection, to make collections for the Royal Infirmary, and as the recommendation had been complied with in such a liberal manner, they did not consider it expedient to appoint another collection to be made at present. They testified, however, the interest which they felt in the success of the Bible Society, by appointing a committee to take the subject into consideration, and to report concerning the method by which they might most effectually promote the glorious object which the society had in view. This business was resumed in the following year. It was found that several of the congregations had already collected for the funds of the British and Foreign Bible Society. The synod expressed their approbation of the conduct of these congregations; and they gave a recommendation to all the congregations, who had not yet made collections for this object, to do so with all convenient speed. Soon after this, associations were formed over the whole country, to aid the British and Foreign Bible Society in their benevolent exertions; and by no denominations of Christians were these associations more generally or more liberally supported, than by the ministers and people connected with the Secession.

At this period, the probationers belonging to the Associate synod were few in number, compared with the vacant congregations where their services were required; and the synod felt themselves greatly fettered in their operations on this account. They appointed, in April 1805, a committee to consider by what means a more abundant supply of preachers might be obtained. This committee reported, that students, who had been engaged in the study of divinity for four years, should be taken on trials for licence; and, that in order to encourage young men to come forward and serve God in the gospel of his Son, a more liberal provision ought to be made for the support of ministers. The synod acquiesced in this report so far, that they authorized the several presbyteries to licence, for that year, those students who had attended the Divinity Hall for four sessions; and they ordered an address to be prepared and circulated among the congregations, pointing out the necessity of a more ample provision being made for those who minis-

tered at the altar, to encourage young men to devote themselves to the work of the ministry.

Some of the students, who were under the inspection of the synod, besides attending the prelections of their own Theological Professor, enrolled themselves also, as students, in the Divinity Halls of the Established Church; and when the season arrived for their being licensed to preach the gospel, instead of giving the Secession Church the benefit of their services, they thought proper to abandon her communion, and to become preachers in the national church. With the view of putting a stop to this practice, an overture was introduced, April 1806, in which the synod was required to take into consideration "the expediency of prohibiting students of divinity in our church from entering as students in the Divinity Hall of any other church." It was proposed by the framers of this overture, that any student, who should be guilty of such conduct, should be considered as renouncing his connexion with the synod. The discussion of this subject was delayed till a future meeting. When the synod afterwards resumed the consideration of it, there was a diversity of opinion among the members, about the propriety of adopting the overture, and it was allowed to lie on the table without any decision being given concerning it.

The students, who were attending the Divinity Hall, under the inspection of Professor Lawson, at Selkirk, became alarmed for their privileges. They drew up, and forwarded to the synod a spirited and well-written representation, on the subject of the above overture. In this representation, the students avowed their determination "to enrol as formerly whatever might be the consequences." This determination the synod justly pronounced to be undutiful and inconsistent with the professed subjection of the students to the supreme court. They testified their "strong disapprobation" of the conduct of the students, in sending such a communication. They admonished them to be cautious how they interfered in any business that might come before the supreme court; and they ordered their clerk to write a letter to Professor Lawson, containing their sentiments on this subject, that he might communicate them to the students, and accompany them with such exhortations as he should judge proper. All this was done, and matters went on as formerly.

During the course of these transactions, the synod were much gratified with a communication which they received from their brethren of the Associate Reformed Church in America, giving an account of their prosperity, and stating the peculiar difficulty which they had, in their infant state, of procuring an adequate supply of preachers to answer the numerous de-

mands that were made for sermon from every quarter of the Union. In this communication, the American brethren say, "We have reason, amidst all our unworthiness and infirmity, to be deeply thankful. Our divine Head has not deserted us, nor left himself without his witnesses amongst us. With one mouth and harmonious effort, our ministers profess and maintain the faith and order once delivered to the saints. Not one of our pulpits is contaminated with erroneous doctrine; not one of our congregations has deserted the banner of presbyterial church government. Extensive as is the territory over which we are scattered, reaching from Montreal to Georgia, and from the Atlantic to beyond the Ohio, we have hitherto been enabled to act upon the great principle of church unity, and are now enjoying the mercy of profound peace in our religious borders. Our chief embarrassment arises from a deficiency of labourers in so large a vineyard. The cry for the bread which came down from heaven waxes louder and louder; and the means of supply are but scanty. We have been much helped by the brethren whom you sent to our assistance. The important object, to which our hopes and exertions have been for several years directed, our Theological Seminary, is through the tender mercy of our God at length accomplished. It commenced last November (1805), at the city of New York, with eight students. The prospect of increase and of utility is beyond what even our fondest hopes had ventured to anticipate. Obstacle after obstacle has been removed; our hearts are encouraged, our hands are made strong; and we proceed in the humble confidence that this plant, which the Lord's own right hand hath planted, will be watered with the dews of his blessing, till it grow up into a tree of life, and spread healing influences over our vast continent."

The letter, which the synod in Scotland sent in reply to this communication, breathed a truly affectionate and apostolic spirit. The following are extracts from it:—"The connection, brethren, and reciprocal communication so happily established between the Associate Reformed Church in North America, and the Associate Church in Britain, is in our opinion an event of the most auspicious and pleasing kind. In this event many wise and good people on both sides of the Atlantic greatly rejoice already; and many more, we trust, both in the present age, and in all succeeding generations, will feel in it a spring of joy and praise, of gratitude and thanksgiving. Our holy religion is a fruit of the love of God; it is a system of love; it draws men to God and to one another with the cords of love; its great object, its ultimate result, is to unite completely, happily, and eternally in love the whole church of the living God, collected from all the coun-

tries of the world, and all the generations of mankind. What wise and good man but would rejoice greatly in a connection which points towards an object so highly sublime, and which leads to a result so pre-eminently glorious?

“The good news which you send us from your distant land tend greatly to strengthen our hands and encourage our hearts in the good work of our common Lord. That in all the borders of our sister-church, stretching from Montreal to Georgia, and from the Atlantic to the Ohio, there are soundness in the faith and steady attachment to presbyterian order; that among all the brethren there are love and peace, and among the inhabitants of the land, in general, a continually growing desire for the true bread; that the brethren sent from us are materially helping the faith and joy of the western church; and that the so much needed and desired Theological Seminary is opened among you with prospects so fair and pleasing; that such is the state of your church, and such the rising hope of the Christian religion in your country, inspire us with pleasure, and make the joy of the Lord our strength. Since we heard these good tidings, we cease not to give thanks for you, making mention of you in our prayers, that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you and your people, and the inhabitants of America, in general, the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of himself, that ye, being more and more enlightened and enlarged together, may know still more fully and happily what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints, and what the exceeding greatness of his power to those who believe.”

After referring to the prosperity enjoyed by the Associate church in Scotland, and to the dark and lowering appearance of the political horizon, not only in Europe, but also in America, the synod concluded their letter with the following expression of fraternal regard:—“But still, whatever shall take place, we cannot forget that the people of the United States are our brethren, our kinsmen according to the flesh. Above all, we still will remember that you are our brethren, in the spirit and fellowship of the gospel of love and peace. We will not cease to commend you to the God of all grace. We will still believe that the very wrath of man shall praise our God. We will expect to see the church of our Redeemer coming out of great tribulation, fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners. We will wait for the time when the sword shall be turned into a ploughshare, and the spear into a pruning-hook. While we groan under the sins and troubles of the present condition, and weep for the miseries of the world, we will not cease to rejoice in the

hope of meeting you, and all the faithful in Christ Jesus, in the kingdom which cannot be moved, in that celestial land, where our purity and peace and love and joy shall be perfect and everlasting."

In the spring of 1808, an application was made to the synod, through the Rev. Mr. Easton of Montreal, from a number of persons residing on the Salmon River, Lower Canada, for an ordained minister to be sent to break amongst them the bread of life. In reference to this application, the synod stated, that if any minister or probationer would offer himself for this service, they would do every thing in their power to assist him in accomplishing his object. The application of these people was, in the present instance, unsuccessful. A similar petition was presented three years after this (in 1811), from a congregation in Halifax, Nova Scotia. These people stated, that they were both able and willing to support a minister, and were very desirous that one should be sent to them. They remitted a sum of money to defray the charges of his journey outward: and they mentioned, that if, after a trial of six months, he should not find his situation agreeable amongst them, or if his gifts should not be acceptable to them, they would be at liberty to separate; and should he wish, at the end of that period, to return to Britain, they would bear his travelling expenses homeward. Mr. James Robson, minister at Lochwinnoch, agreed to undertake this mission. The pastoral relation betwixt him and his congregation in Scotland was dissolved: and he soon after sailed for his new destination in Nova Scotia.

A petition from the session of Wells Street congregation, London, brought before the synod the subject of the psalmody. The session requested leave to make a selection of spiritual songs and hymns, to be used by their church in the praise of God, along with the Psalms of David; which selection they proposed submitting to the supreme court for its approbation. The synod deferred the consideration of this petition till a future meeting. In September 1811, this subject was resumed by them; and, after some discussion, they were unanimously of opinion, that the enlargement of the psalmody was "a most desirable and necessary object." The synod then agreed, that they would take into consideration, at their next meeting, whether permission might not be given to the congregations under their inspection, to make use of the paraphrases and hymns, published by the Assembly of the Church of Scotland; and, in the meantime, they appointed a numerous committee to consider what corrections it might be necessary to make on these paraphrases and hymns, and whether it might not be proper to make additions to them. This committee reported to

the synod, at their meeting in spring, in the following year, that they had particularly examined the paraphrases and hymns of the Church of Scotland; and they recommended the appointment of a special committee to make a selection from these and other paraphrases and hymns, for the use of the congregations under their inspection; and, until such a selection be made, that liberty be given to the ministers of the synod to make use of such of the paraphrases of the Church of Scotland as might appear to them calculated to promote the ends of edification. This recommendation was adopted. A select committee was appointed for the object now specified. Whether the committee made any progress in the business intrusted to them, I am unable to state. It does not appear that any report was ever presented by them to the synod.

The renewal of the charter of the East India Company, in 1813, presented a favourable opportunity for procuring liberty to send missionaries to the British dominions in the East. A general and vigorous effort was made by the friends of missions connected with various religious denominations, to obtain the insertion of a clause in the new charter, permitting missionaries from this country to proceed direct to India in British ships, instead of compelling them to take the more circuitous route by America, and also guaranteeing them protection, as British subjects, while engaged in prosecuting their philanthropic labours in India. Petitions were presented to Parliament on this subject from various dissenting communities, and also from many pious persons connected with the Establishment. The Associate synod gave their hearty co-operation in this labour of love. When they met in April 1813, the following petition was prepared by a committee; and, after receiving the signature of every minister and elder present, was forwarded to both houses of Parliament:—

“ The humble petition of the subscribers, ministers, and elders of the society of Presbyterians in Scotland, known by the name of Burgher Seceders, met at Edinburgh in their Associate synod :—

“ SHOWETH,

“ That your petitioners regard with the deepest commiseration the spiritual ignorance and moral degradation of the immense population of the British dominions in India. .

“ That in the judgment of your petitioners, the only effectual remedy for the great evils, which afflict that great part of the empire, is to be found in the free diffusion of the knowledge of the doctrines and precepts of Christianity among its inhabitants.

“ That your petitioners, convinced that our holy religion is the best friend to peace and good order, are so far from apprehending danger to the British interests in India from prudent attempts to enlighten and Christianize that part of the empire, that they consider it as the bounden duty of Christians and Britons to use all proper means for this benevolent purpose ; and contemplate with pleasure the happy consequences of such attempts, not only in the moral and religious improvement of the inhabitants of India, but in their increasing attachment to the British government, and the greater security of these distant and valuable provinces.

“ May it, therefore, please your Honourable House to provide in the charter intended to be granted to the East India Company, that it shall be lawful for all denominations of his Majesty's subjects to send Christian ministers and teachers to India, for the purpose of instructing the nations in the knowledge of Christianity ; and that such ministers and teachers shall enjoy full protection, so long as they shall act agreeably to the laws, and demean themselves as good and peaceable subjects. And your petitioners,” &c.

The memorable events of the year 1814 excited a tumult of joy in the nation. The success of the allied armies, the abdication of Bonaparte, and the termination of the long and bloody war, in which the nations of Europe had been engaged, produced in the minds of men mingled emotions of gratitude and delight. The members of the Associate synod participated in the joyful feelings, which these events produced ; and at their meeting in spring, this year, they unanimously resolved to present an address to the Prince Regent, congratulating him on the favourable turn which public affairs had taken. In the following year they appointed a day of solemn thanksgiving to be observed in all their congregations for the restoration of peace.

The attention of the synod was drawn toward the subject of education, by an overture which was laid upon their table, on the 7th of September, 1814. The object of this overture was to obtain the sanction of the synod to the erection of schools, in connexion with the congregations under their inspection. The following is an outline of the plan which it was proposed to adopt ;—“ That in every congregation, where it is practicable, a school be established for the instruction of children in the ordinary branches of education ; that the school be under the management of the minister, and a committee of the elders and deacons, or managers, to whom shall belong the choice of the teacher, the payment of his salary, the fixing of the books and catechisms to be taught, and the school-fees,

and in general every thing connected with the external or internal economy of the institution ; that the number of scholars be limited ; that children of persons of every denomination be admissible, but that a preference be given to the children of the members of the congregation ; that the teacher have a fixed salary to a certain amount, but that the extent of his income be left in some measure dependent on the success of his own exertions ; that provision be made for the education of the children of poor members of the congregation, and, if possible, of other poor persons, either gratuitously or at a reduced rate ; that, in order to render the choice of a teacher by the committee of management valid, it be necessary that the presbytery of the bounds should be satisfied with the candidate's abilities and character ; that the committee of management visit and examine the school every month ; and that the presbytery, or a committee of presbytery, examine the school annually, or more frequently, as shall be found necessary ; that in case of any difference arising between the committee of management and the teacher, it be referred to the presbytery."

This overture was allowed to lie on the table till the month of April 1816, when it gave rise to a long discussion. Those who pled for the adopting of it maintained, that, should the synod give it their sanction, a Christian education would thereby be secured to a considerable number of the young members of the church, and to many others ; that the number of unqualified teachers would be diminished, and the exertions of the parochial teachers would be stimulated ; that it would extend and perpetuate the advantages of which the Secession Church was productive to the country ; that it would furnish useful employment to the students of divinity during the term of their theological course ; that it would open up an honourable retreat for those who had been unsuccessful candidates for the ministry ; and, finally, that it would afford opportunities for observing and bringing forward young persons of talent, for future service in the church, who might otherwise languish in neglect and obscurity. Those who opposed the adoption of the overture maintained, that there was no necessity for such a complicated system of machinery being employed to accomplish the object in view ; that the plan, if adopted, would operate, in a great majority of instances, in direct hostility to the established schools, which had been so beneficial to the country ; that it was calculated to cherish an exclusive and illiberal spirit ; and that, by producing a strong reaction, it was likely to defeat itself. The opposition to the overture was successful. When the question was stated, "Dismiss, or Adopt?" it carried by a majority to "Dismiss."

This resolution, however, was connected with an expression of the synod's approbation of the good intentions of those who proposed the overture, and with a recommendation to all under their inspection to pay attention to the religious education of their children. From this decision two ministers and two elders dissented.

At the meeting of the synod in spring 1816, a letter was addressed to the moderator from the moderator of the Original Burghier (or Old Light) synod, who were sitting at the same time in Edinburgh. This letter was very brief and enigmatical. It required an immediate and categorical answer to be given to the following question:—"Are your brethren of the synod now ready to remove the Preamble prefixed to the Formula, which was the ground of offence and cause of separation?" No reason was assigned for proposing this question, and no mention was made of any particular object that was to be gained by an answer being returned to it. The inference deduced from the letter was, that it was an indirect movement made in advance toward a union. If this was the object of the letter, the answer, which the synod instructed their moderator to return, held out little encouragement that it would speedily be accomplished. The answer (which was addressed to the Rev. Samuel Armour, moderator of the Original Burghier synod), was to the following effect:—

"Rev. Sir,—I have received a letter, dated Gray's Close Meeting-house, 30th April, 1817, and signed by you as moderator, and have taken the liberty to lay it before the Associate synod.

"The Associate synod regret that your communication does not enable them to form any precise idea of its object: but though they had been distinctly informed of your design in requesting a categorical answer to it in the course of the day, it was impossible for them, when the court was engaged in other important business, to give an answer within a short space to a question relating to a subject which has been the matter of discussion for twenty years. The assertion, which you quote from the statement of evidence, that the Associate synod hold the very same principles at this moment which have been professed by them in all periods of their history, was not then made for the first time, but will be found in the synod's address to the people of their charge published many years ago. The synod lament the number of divisions which prevail in the church of Christ, especially among persons who are agreed in their doctrine and church order, and will always be ready to adopt such measures for promoting union among Christians, as are calculated to serve the ends of public edification. Meanwhile, I am, Rev. Sir, yours respectfully," &c.

Since the period of Mr. Robson's departure for Halifax, the synod had sent four additional labourers across the Atlantic: these were Messrs. Laidlaw, Douglas, Taylor, and Bell. Mr. Laidlaw was for some time minister of a congregation, in connexion with the Relief, in Dunning. He petitioned to be received into the communion of the Secession Church, with a

view to his being missioned to Nova Scotia. The Associate synod granted his request; and he left this country in 1814. Mr. Douglas undertook his mission, in consequence of an application being made to the synod for a preacher to be sent to Nova Scotia. He received ordination from the presbytery of Kilmarnock, and sailed for his destination two years after Mr. Laidlaw. Soon after his arrival, he was settled in a congregation in Prince Edward's Island, where he still continues to labour. Mr. Taylor had the pastoral charge, for several years, of the congregation of Stonehouse, in Scotland, which he resigned: and, at his own request, the synod sent him to strengthen the hands of those who were labouring in British America. The scene of his transatlantic labours was Osnaburgh and Williamsburgh. Mr. Bell's destination was Canada, to which he was missioned, in accordance with a petition which he presented to the synod. After he arrived in that country, he became minister of a congregation at New Perth. The expense connected with all these missions was defrayed by the synod.

Intelligence was received by the supreme court, in 1818, that the brethren under their inspection, in Nova Scotia, had formed a union with their Antiburgher brethren, and other presbyterians in the same province, and had constituted themselves into a synod, under the designation of "The synod of the Presbyterian Church of Nova Scotia." The synod, on receiving this information, did not consider it necessary to enter into any discussion of the principles on which this union had been formed; but agreed to record their opinion concerning them, in general, "that they are such as this synod can cordially acknowledge the brethren in Nova Scotia as a sister-church, and are ready to co-operate with them in promoting the great interests of the gospel, and of the presbyterian government of the church in that part of the world." At the request of several brethren who were labouring in Canada, the synod agreed, at this meeting, to erect them into a presbytery, in connexion with the synod at home.\*

Notice has been taken, in a preceding part of this volume, † of an attempt made by the Seceders in Ireland to form a union, which proved unsuccessful. This desirable object, however, was at length happily accomplished. A joint committee was appointed, in 1817, by the two Secession synods in that country, to make such additions to the original Secession

\* The brethren who were at this time erected into the presbytery of Upper Canada, were—Messrs. Robert Easton, Montreal; William Smart, Brockville; William Taylor, Osnaburgh and Williamsburgh; and William Bell, New Perth.

† See p. 426.

Testimony, as might adapt it to the state of religion in Ireland, "that so it might serve at once as a basis of union, and the public testimony of the united body, in favour of truth and against error." This committee held several meetings, and, in a report which they presented to their respective synods, they stated, that, though several able papers had been submitted to their consideration, which might serve as a display of "the present truth," yet they had not been able to frame such a document as they could with confidence recommend to be adopted, as part of the testimony of the united body. But they unanimously recommended, that, as the synods had agreed to take, as a basis of union, the Westminster Confession of Faith, the Larger and Shorter Catechisms, the Directory for Worship, and Form of Presbyterian Church Government, with the original Secession Testimony, they should forthwith unite, "leaving the adaptation to be afterwards digested, adopted, and exhibited to the world." To inspire both ministers and people with mutual confidence, and to remove every vestige of suspicion that might unhappily be entertained on either side, they proposed that the following be adopted as the articles of union :—

I. The Presbyterian synod of Ireland, distinguished by the name Seceders, do declare our constant and inviolable attachment to our already approved and recognised standards, namely, the Westminster Confession of Faith, the Larger and Shorter Catechisms, the Directory for Worship, and Form of Presbyterian Church Government, with the original Secession Testimony.

II. As we unite under the banner of a Testimony, we are determined, in all time coming, as our forefathers have set us the example, to assert the truth when it is injured or opposed, and to condemn and testify against error and immorality, wherever they may seem to prevail.

III. We do hereby cancel the names Burgher and Anti-burgher for ever, and unite in one synod, to be hereafter known by the name of "The Presbyterian synod, distinguished by the name Seceders."

IV. We declare our insubordination to any superior ecclesiastical court ; while, at the same time, we do hereby signify our hearty inclination to hold a correspondence with our sister-church in Scotland, or elsewhere, for our mutual edification ; but we think it expedient not to lay ourselves under any restriction as to the manner of said correspondence.

V. We let all the presbyteries and congregations in our connexion bear the same name, and, in the mean time, stand as they were before the coalescence.

VI. We agree carefully to preserve all the records of the

two synods, from their formation in the kingdom, till the present day.

At a meeting of the two Irish synods, held in Cookstown, July 7, 1818, these articles were discussed by them; and being approved of, the union was accomplished.

A considerable degree of interest was excited, at this period, in the religious state of the Highlands, by the reports of various members of synod, who had been appointed, from time to time, to itinerate both in the northern and western districts of that interesting portion of our native country.\* After the return of Messrs. Ebenezer Brown and John M'Kerrow from an extensive preaching tour in the Highlands, made agreeably to the appointment of synod, in the summer of 1819, a memorial was presented by them to the supreme court, giving an account of the religious destitution of many of the districts through which they had passed; stating the eagerness which the Highlanders had manifested to hear the gospel; and calling upon the synod to adopt measures for sending to their Celtic countrymen the benefits of an evangelical and faithful ministry, where such a blessing might not already be enjoyed. The following extract from this memorial gives a pleasing view of the spirit of religious inquiry, which has been excited in many parts of the Highlands, by the itinerating labours of pious individuals connected with various denominations of Christians:—

“ We may further add, that, in consequence of a considerable proportion of the people being now taught to read their own language, and in consequence of the Scriptures being circulated among them, in a dialect with which they are familiar, the light of divine truth is beginning to break in upon them; so that they are now, in many places, beginning to know what is the gospel; and nothing but the gospel will satisfy them. A spirit of religious inquiry has been excited, chiefly by the labours of pious and zealous individuals, who have been in the habit of itinerating from place to place; so that the people, having now got a tasting of doctrine, with which they were formerly unacquainted, are ardently longing for more. Provided they can only be permitted to enjoy it, they care not from what quarter it comes, or by what instrumentality it is conveyed. When a minister goes amongst them, who has the character of being an evangelical preacher (no

\* The individuals who were engaged, at different periods, in these itinerating labours in the Highlands, were—Messrs. John Brown, sen., Ebenezer Brown, Donald Fraser, John Brown, jun., James Ellis, John M'Kerrow, and Andrew Kennedy. Excursions, for the purpose of preaching the gospel, were also made, by appointment of synod, in Galloway and in the Stewartry of Kirkcudbright, by Messrs. Walter Dunlop, John Brown, jun., John Law, and Andrew Scott.

matter to what denomination he may belong), the people flock to hear him, and listen with gladness to the message which he delivers. They will travel ten, twelve, and even fifteen miles, to enjoy the benefit of his ministration. We do not say that this spirit exists in every part of the Highlands; but we say that it exists in very many parts, and that it appears to be daily gaining ground. In the isles, with very few exceptions, the same symptoms are beginning to manifest themselves. To take advantage of this growing spirit, and to turn it to the very best account, labourers are required: pious, and active, and zealous men, who shall be able to speak the language, and who shall be accustomed to the habits of the mountaineers. The fields are whitening rapidly for the harvest, and there is a loud call for labourers to go forth and exert themselves in the vineyard of the great Husbandman.”\*

In consequence of this memorial, and the representations made by the individuals who presented it, the synod appointed a committee “to concert measures for affording a more abundant and regular supply of the means of religious and moral improvement to the destitute inhabitants of the Highlands and Islands.” This committee presented, at the spring meeting of synod, in 1820, a long report, embodying a great variety of well-authenticated documents, illustrative of the past and present religious state of the Highlands; pointing out the inadequacy of the existing means of religious instruction to the wants of the Gaelic population, the deficiencies of the public instructors connected with the Establishment, and the prevalence of the Roman Catholic superstition among the Highlanders; and detailing the outline of a plan, for the synod to adopt, with a view to promote the spiritual interests of that portion of our countrymen. The main features of this plan were, that a standing committee be appointed by the synod to be denominated, “The Committee of Missions into the Highlands and Islands;” that the business intrusted to this committee be, first, the training up of pious Highlanders to preach the gospel in their native language; and, secondly, the employment and maintenance of missionaries, in itinerating throughout the Highlands and Islands; that the missionaries thus employed be under the inspection, and subject to the discipline, of the Associate synod; that presbyteries be at liberty to license those who are intended for Gaelic preachers, after three years’ attendance at the University, and four at the Divinity-Hall; it being understood, that such young men be sent up to the Divinity-Hall before their third year of study at the University.

\* Christian Repository for 1819, p. 603.

The synod unanimously approved of the report which their committee presented, adopted the plan which it recommended, and ordered it to be printed and circulated among the congregations under their inspection. Though the Associate synod were, immediately after this, united with their brethren of the General Associate synod, yet the important object of sending the gospel to the destitute districts of the Highlands was not lost sight of by the United synod. Several young men, acquainted with the Gaelic language, were trained up under the inspection of the synod, and sent to labour in the Highland districts. One of these Gaelic preachers,\* after labouring for a short period among his countrymen at home, undertook a mission to Canada, in consequence of an application made by a number of individuals in that country, to send them a minister who was acquainted with the Gaelic language. If the number of Gaelic preachers, who have hitherto been sent forth from the Secession to labour among the Highlanders, be small, when compared with the resources of the Secession Church, and with the wants of the Gaelic population, this has been, in a great measure, owing to the difficulty of procuring persons who were properly qualified, by their talents and piety, for engaging in such an important work. For though it is not doubted, that many such individuals may be found in the Highlands, yet the synod have had but few opportunities of becoming acquainted with them. Disappointments, too, which they have experienced, have rendered them somewhat cautious in receiving applications.

When the above-mentioned report on the religious state of the Highlands was published by the synod's committee, attempts were made to throw discredit on the statements which it contained, by an anonymous writer in a religious periodical connected with the Established Church.† A clever and witty article, from the pen of the talented editor himself,‡ endeavoured to turn the whole affair into burlesque. The object of these communications, which appeared in the periodical now referred to, was to show, that the inhabitants of the Highlands were not more distinguished for their ignorance or immorality, than the inhabitants of the Lowlands; that their religious instructors were sufficiently competent for the work in which they were engaged, and possessed the entire confidence of their flocks; and that there was no peculiar necessity for missionary exertions being made to supply the religious destitution of these remote districts. Instead of hailing the co-operation of the Secession Church, in the patriotic and be-

\* Mr. Peter Ferguson.

† The Edinburgh Christian Instructor.

‡ The late Rev. Andrew Thomson, D.D.

nevolent work of diffusing the light of the gospel among the scattered population of the Highlands and Islands of Scotland, efforts were thus made, through the medium of the press, to excite a spirit of opposition in the Highlanders against the Secession, and to render abortive any missionary undertaking in which the latter might be disposed to engage, for the benefit of their Gaelic countrymen.

Of late years, a loud outcry has been raised about the lamentable destitution of the means of religious instruction, which exists in the Highland districts ; and it has been tauntingly asked, " What have dissenters done for supplying the deficiency of the means of grace, which exists in these districts ? Why have the Secession, and other dissenting communities, confined their labours to the populous towns and villages of the Lowlands, instead of going and labouring in these mountainous and thinly-peopled regions of the North ? " The taunt is at least ungenerous, if not unjust. The public ought to know, that dissenters have made frequent attempts to carry the blessings of the gospel into these regions ; and that these attempts have been almost uniformly opposed by the friends of the Establishment. In some instances, these attempts have partially succeeded ; in others, they have met with no success at all, on account of the determined opposition that has been made to them by the very persons who are now raising the cry of destitution. We appeal to the Christian world, if it be fair and honourable conduct, first to oppose, by every possible means, the well-intentioned efforts of dissenters to send the gospel to the destitute districts of the Highlands ; and then after having succeeded in their opposition, to turn round upon the very men whose exertions they have thus thwarted, and ask them with a sneer, " Why have you not gone and preached the gospel in these destitute districts ? " Such conduct may be compared to that of an individual, who, when the inmates of a dwelling are perishing for want of food, places himself in the threshold, to prevent any one from making the attempt to relieve the famishing inhabitants ; and who, after having succeeded in keeping the benevolent at a distance, raises a loud outcry against them for not having made any effort to bring food to the miserable beings within.

Professor Lawson, after having presided over the Theological Seminary of the Associate synod for a period of thirty-three years, with great honour to himself, and great advantage to the religious community with which he was connected, died in the month of February 1820. He was a man of extensive learning, of eminent piety, and of childlike simplicity of manners. His attainments in biblical literature were of the highest order. So thorough and accurate was his knowledge of

the Scriptures, that he could with ease quote from memory, and explain extempore, almost any portion of the sacred volume, not only in the English version, but in the original languages. It has been affirmed of him, that, if all the existing copies of the Bible had been destroyed, by some calamitous event, he could have restored, from recollection, both the Hebrew and the Greek text almost entire. "Take him all in all," he has had few equals in any church. His latter end was every way corresponding with the holy and exemplary life which he had lived. A short while before he expired, he took the members of his family severally by the hand, pronounced (like Jacob of old) a blessing upon each, and bade them an affectionate farewell. He then lifted up both his hands, and, looking around him on the company that was assembled in his chamber, he said with a tremulous voice, "The Lord my God bless you all!" The last words he was heard to utter were, "Lord, take me to paradise," when he fell asleep in Jesus.\*

When the synod received intelligence of his death, at their first meeting after that event had taken place, they agreed to enter upon their record the following memorial of his excellencies as an individual, and of the eminent services which he had rendered to the church, as their Theological Professor:—"The synod feel themselves called upon to express in their minutes the peculiar and important obligations which they and the people of their charge are under to the Head of the church, for the prolonged and important services performed by this worthy and venerable member of their body, as their Professor of Divinity, to whom, under God, most of the ministers are much indebted for their knowledge of the gospel of the blessed God, and their qualifications for preaching it to their fellow-men; and the impression of whose amiable and venerable character for piety, knowledge of the word of God, sacred erudition, and every excellence that can adorn the man, the Christian, and the professor of divinity, they ever wish to retain and cherish, as an excitement to the faithful discharge of the duties of their office."

As arrangements were now making for effecting a union between the Burgher and Antiburgher sections of the Secession Church, a proposal was made, that the synod should delay choosing a successor to Dr. Lawson, in the Professorship, until the union was accomplished, when the election would be made by the United synod. This proposal was overruled. It was considered inexpedient to delay filling up this important situation. A committee was appointed to prepare and

\* The reader will find an interesting account of the life of this excellent man, in the *Christian Repository* for 1820.

present to the synod a list of persons, who might be qualified to take the charge of the Theological Seminary. From the list which the committee presented, the Rev. Dr. Dick, one of the ministers of Glasgow, was elected Professor of Divinity, on the 27th of April, 1820, by a large majority of the suffrages of his brethren.

At this meeting, a communication was received from the sister synod in Ireland, stating that they were adopting active measures for diffusing the knowledge of the gospel in the destitute parts of the south and west of their native island; and craving that their brethren in Scotland would give them assistance in this work, by preparing their congregations to receive a deputation, who had been appointed to come over to this country, and collect funds for carrying on their missionary enterprise. The synod returned a friendly answer to this communication. They expressed their warmest approbation of the exertions which the Irish brethren were making for conveying the light of divine truth into the dark districts of their own isle; they agreed to recommend to the congregations under their charge, the object which these brethren had in view; and they appointed a committee to correspond with the Irish deputation, and to make such arrangements as might enable them successfully to accomplish the object of their mission, when they should arrive in this country.

The Associate synod signalized the close of their history, as a separate religious society, by agreeing to present a loyal address to his Majesty, George IV., on his accession to the throne. This was one of the last public acts which they performed, previous to their being reunited in church-fellowship with their Antiburgher brethren. The address which was presented to the throne on this occasion, breathed the same spirit of devoted attachment to the reigning family, and to the civil institutions of the country, as had characterized the Secession during the past years of its existence.

The next meeting of the synod was appointed to be held on the 5th of September, 1820, when it was determined that it should cease to exist as a distinct ecclesiastical judicatory. That meeting will long be a memorable one in the annals of the Christian church. It constituted an important epoch in the religious history of our country. Then was exhibited to the world the noble and the rare spectacle of two religious and widely-ramified societies, that had been long separated from one another, being reunited on a solid Scriptural basis, without the slightest compromise of principle on the part of either.

## CHAPTER XIX.

Union of Secession Church—Preparatory causes—First movement—Mid-Calder committee—Statement published by committee—Meeting at Buckhaven—Resolutions adopted—And published—Numerous meetings of sessions and congregations—Agree to petition for union—Eighty-eight petitions presented to Associate Synod—Union committee appointed by Associate Synod—Letter of moderator to General Associate Synod—Letter received with joy—Seventy-four petitions presented to General Associate Synod—Union committee appointed by General Associate Synod—Letter of moderator in reply to Associate Synod—Meeting of the united committee—High importance of their work—Their peculiar qualifications for it—Basis of union prepared by sub-committee—Fully discussed—Unanimously adopted by committee—Presented to the two Synods—Reviewed and corrected—Adopted by the Synods—Associate Synod unanimous—Several ministers dissent from adopting Basis in General Associate Synod—Articles of basis—Interchange of deputations between the two Synods—Engage in devotional services with each other—Great interest excited by the proposed union—Meeting of the two Synods—Reunion accomplished—Interesting scenes—Remarks on the union.

HAVING now completed the account, which I proposed giving, of the two great branches of the Secession Church, during the long period of their separation, I shall conclude this part of the narrative, by detailing the particulars of an event, to which the history of the church, in modern times, furnishes no parallel, viz. their reunion.

For a considerable number of years previous to this event taking place, a spirit of brotherly-kindness, and a feeling of mutual regard, had been gradually gaining ground among the ministers and people belonging to both synods. The lapse of time had blunted the keen edge of partisanship, and caused the original points of difference to appear greatly diminished in magnitude. By mingling daily in the common intercourse of life, and by being occasionally guilty of the venial transgression of hearing the ministers of the opposite party preach, at sacramental and other seasons, the people began to find, that there was no essential difference between the doctrine taught by the one party, and that which was inculcated by the other; and that, in matters of practical godliness and of ecclesiastical discipline, they were substantially agreed. A desire was cherished, in several quarters, that a union should take place, long before it was actually accomplished; and the preceding pages record the fact, that petitions to this effect were presented to the supreme courts, on both sides of the Secession.

But what tended more, probably, than any other cause, to bring about this desirable event, was the missionary, and Bible, and other religious societies, that sprung up over the whole country, and drew good men of all denominations together, as toward a common centre. Burgher and Antiburgher mingled here in the same committee, met on the same platform, engaged in the same religious exercises, felt their bosoms glow with the same sacred flame, and laboured to promote the same hallowed cause. By frequent meetings in these local associations, and by being cordially united in the same benevolent work, those kindly feelings, which they had begun previously to cherish, were greatly strengthened; and any remains of prejudice that might be still lurking in their bosom, gradually disappeared, under the influence of Christian love, like the frosts of winter melted under the genial influence of the spring. The whole mass became thus insensibly leavened with a spirit that was exceedingly favourable to a complete amalgamation; and when the proposal for a union was first made, it touched upon a chord that vibrated from the one extremity of the community to the other. Instead of being coldly received, and sullenly thrust aside, as a subject not yet ripe for discussion, it operated like a spark of fire cast into a heap of combustible materials. The flame of Christian affection, which had for some time been glowing within, immediately burst forth. It spread with rapidity from town to town, and from hamlet to hamlet. The cry for union became all but universal; and the chief difficulty with those whose business it was to deliberate and determine concerning such an important measure, was not to urge on the movement, but to restrain the impetuosity of it, lest, in the eagerness of the parties to become one, they should neglect or overlook those prudential arrangements which were necessary to secure both the completeness and the permanence of the union.

The honour of having originated this truly Christian movement, belongs, so far as I can learn, to persons connected with the Secession congregations of Mid-Calder and East-Calder. A reading society had been instituted at the former of these places, consisting of members belonging to the two congregations, who were thus brought frequently together, and, among other topics of conversation, discoursed on the subject of union. Those who took the lead in this business, were, Mr. William Mathewson, one of the Mid-Calder elders, and Mr. Robert M'Gregor, a member of East-Calder congregation. Professor Duncan, in a communication addressed to the writer of this narrative, says:—"Mr. Mathewson frequently talked to me on the subject, and wished some active measures to be taken. But having a considerable development of the bump

of caution, I was afraid of raising a *muir-burn* that might not be easily quenched. They were determined, however, to sound the public mind; and the two above-named got a meeting with others, where it was agreed to invite correspondence. They came and informed me of this; and, at their request, cordially approving of the measure, I drew up the invitation, to be published in the *Christian Magazine and Repository*, and framed other papers, in the prosecution of the labours of the Mid-Calder committee."

The "sounding of the public mind" was made by means of the following statement, published in the two religious periodicals now mentioned:—" *Mid-Calder, 20th August, 1818.* A meeting took place here, this evening, of a considerable number of the two congregations, commonly denominated Burgher and Antiburgher, for the purpose of considering the practicability and advantage of a general union of the various denominations of dissenters throughout Britain, primarily of all evangelical presbyterians; when it was unanimously agreed, that, as such an union is highly desirable, so the present seems to be a favourable season for attempting it. The following persons,—Samuel Neal, William Mathewson, Robert Dick, Robert Law, A. Sommerville, Robert M'Gregor, James Carlaw, G. Hastie,—were therefore chosen as a committee, and requested to draw out, and send to the editors of the *Christian Magazine and Repository*, for insertion, an intimation of their desire to correspond through those publications, and co-operate with all congregations who may have a similar inclination.

"Their present intention is, and they conceive it may be necessary for every congregation, to send to their ecclesiastical courts a petition, stating their desire that the subject be taken into their consideration. Of the propriety of this, and other steps for obtaining the object in view, this committee look for suggestions from those congregations which are more numerous, and better able to direct to suitable means. From the liberal sentiments and friendly intercourse of Christians of the present day, and with America and Ireland full in view, there is much reason to hope for a favourable issue to endeavours so obviously conducive to the general interests of religion."\*

The effect which this invitation produced among the members of that religious community for whom it was specially intended, showed that the originators of it had not miscalculated the state of public feeling in the Secession Church. No sooner was it circulated in the different districts of the country, by means of the periodicals in which it was inserted, than a

\* *Christian Repository*, p. 518.

general and eager movement took place among the people belonging both to the Burgher and Antiburgher branches of the Secession. Meetings of sessions and of congregations were held in every part of the country, to consider the practicability and expediency of a union, and to adopt measures with a view to the accomplishment of this desirable object. The first meeting of this kind, that took place after the appearance of the Mid-Calder manifesto, was held at Buckhaven, and consisted of persons belonging to the two congregations of Buckhaven and Dubbieside. As a specimen of the harmonious and agreeable manner in which these meetings were usually conducted, and of the excellent sentiments which animated the mass of the people, I shall here insert the account, which was published, of the proceedings of this meeting.

*“Buckhaven Meeting-house, October 8, 1818.—At a meeting (which was opened with prayer, by the Rev. David Telford), of the associate congregations of Buckhaven and Dubbieside, usually denominated Burgher and Antiburgher, held here this evening, in consequence of an intimation from the pulpits of both places of worship, on the preceding Sabbath, to consider the practicability and advantages which might be derived from a union of presbyterians, of all denominations in this country, in church-fellowship, who are in a state of secession from the judicatories of the Church of Scotland; to express their approbation of the meeting at Mid-Calder, on the 20th of August; and to co-operate with their brethren in that place, and other congregations in the Secession interest, who are desirous of imitating the laudable example lately exhibited in America and Ireland,—Mr. William Thomson was called to the chair. After the attention of both congregations was directed to the important object in view, the following persons were chosen as a committee: Messrs. Lawrence Arnot, Walter Kennedy, William Coupar, John Kennedy, James Robbie, Andrew Thomson, John Landale, James Aitken, William Deas, Thomas Morgan, John Patrick, and Alexander Drybrough (four to be a quorum), to meet in Dubbieside Meeting-house, on Thursday next week, at seven o'clock in the evening, with powers to adjourn, and to call a general meeting of both congregations, when it is judged necessary. It was moved and seconded, that the members of both congregations present should, by lifting up their right hand, testify their good will to the union proposed, when it appeared, by a great show of hands in every part of the house, that they were well-affected towards the truly desirable object, so much calculated for promoting the interests of religion. It was also agreed that, in order to give publicity to this meeting, the editors of the Christian Magazine, and Christian*

Repository, be requested to insert it in their useful periodical publications. Concluded with prayer.

“WILLIAM THOMSON, *Preses.*”

The committee now named met at the time and place appointed, and prepared the following resolutions, which were also published:—

“1. That a general union of all presbyterian dissenters throughout Britain, holding evangelical principles and sentiments, appears to us not only to be truly desirable, but also practicable.

“2. That this union may be permanent, it must be founded on principles which seem to be not only unexceptionable but honourable to all concerned.

“3. That a correspondence be opened with us, and other congregations who may be actuated by a strong desire to have this important object accomplished.

“4. That it be recommended to all congregations of similar views with ourselves, that they hold meetings for obtaining an object so highly desirable in itself, and so much calculated for the welfare of the Secession Church.

“5. That it is judged expedient to request our respective ecclesiastical courts to take this subject immediately into consideration.

“6. That it be recommended to all the sessions of the Secession Church, to do what they can to forward this object, so highly favourable for promoting the general interests of religion.”\*

The result of the movement produced by the publication of the above, and similar documents, was, that when the Associate and the General Associate synods held their spring meeting in 1819, the tables of both of these ecclesiastical judicatories were literally covered with petitions from the congregations under their inspection, all of them uttering the same prayer, that measures might be immediately adopted with a view to effect a union between the two synods.

The number of petitions laid on the table of the Associate synod, at this meeting, amounted to eighty-one; and, at a subsequent meeting, there were seven additional presented, making in all eighty-eight.

On the 29th of April, the Associate synod took the subject of these petitions under consideration. After hearing a few of the petitions read, they were unanimous in expressing the happiness which they felt on account of the ardent desire of

\* Christian Repository, pp. 693, 694.

union which animated the two great branches of the Secession; and they resolved that they would do every thing that was competent to them as a court, to give effect to the desire which was thus so generally expressed. They appointed a numerous committee to meet with those brethren, whom it was expected the General Associate synod would appoint to correspond with them, in order to form a basis of union. This committee consisted of the following persons: Drs. James Hall, James Peddie, James Husband, John Dick, Hugh Jamieson,—Messrs. Andrew Lothian, Thomas Aitchieson, Thomas Brown, James Hay, James Law, John Jamieson, William Kidston, John Brown senior, John Brown junior, Patrick Comrie, and David Greig, ministers; with Messrs. John Brown, Andrew Grierson, John Scott, Robert Walker, and James Waddel, elders.

The synod, impressed with the great importance of the business in which they were engaged, offered up solemn prayer to God, giving thanks to him for the “present promising appearances,” and imploring his direction and influence for bringing this matter to a successful issue: after which they united in singing the 122d Psalm. They then appointed their moderator to write a letter to the moderator of the other synod, to be communicated to his brethren, informing them of what the Associate synod had done. This letter was to the following effect:—

*“Edinburgh, April 30, 1819.*

“REVEREND SIR,—By appointment of the Associate Synod, I have the honour to inform you, that the Synod, at their meeting yesterday, having received upwards of eighty petitions from different congregations, praying that measures may be taken for effecting a union between the two great bodies of the Secession Church, unanimously resolved to do every thing in their power for attaining that most desirable object; and, after prayer and thanksgiving to God, appointed a committee of sixteen ministers and five elders, to converse with any committee that may be appointed with the same view, by the General Associate Synod, at their approaching meeting, in order to form the basis of a union between the two Synods; authorizing the said committee to appoint a sub-committee, and nominating the Rev. Dr. James Hall, of Rose Street, Edinburgh, their convener, with whom the convener of any committee, appointed for the same purpose by the General Associate Synod, may correspond.

“Allow me, Sir, as an individual, to express my heartfelt joy, that a measure so congenial with the spirit of the gospel, and so much calculated to advance the cause of our dear Redeemer, has been brought forward; and my most cordial wishes that the result may be such as to meet the desires and expectations of so many thousands of God’s people.

“That the Holy Spirit may rest on you, and your brethren, and on all the congregations under your care, is the earnest prayer of, Reverend Sir, your brother in Christ Jesus,

*“GEORGE YOUNG, Moderator.”*

“To the Reverend the Moderator of the General Associate Synod to meet at Edinburgh, in May 1819.”

This letter was read in the General Associate synod, on the 11th of May, and was heard "with respectful attention, and the deepest interest." On the following day seventy-four petitions were laid upon the synod's table, all of them praying for measures to be adopted, with a view to effect a union. After several of these petitions were read, and commissioners heard in their support, the synod engaged in praise and prayer. Mr. James Hay of Alyth, one of the oldest members of the synod, conducted these devotional exercises. He commenced by giving out the 126th Psalm, after which he prayed, and then concluded the exercise, by giving out a portion of the 102d Psalm. On the 13th, the synod delivered their sentiments on the subject of the union. Part of this day also was spent by them in praise and prayer. The 122d Psalm was sung, and Mr. Alexander Pringle of Perth prayed. After long and harmonious deliberation, the court were unanimous in agreeing to appoint a committee of an equal number with that which had been appointed by the Associate synod to co-operate with them in forming a basis of union. This committee consisted of the following persons:—Drs. John Jamieson, John Mitchell, David Black, —Messrs. Alexander Pringle, William Ferrier, James Muckersie, George Paxton, Robert Culbertson, James Stark, Robert Muter, Hugh Heugh, James Hay, Alexander Duncan, Robert Morison, James Simpson, and George Stevenson, ministers,—with Messrs. Andrew Mitchell, William Ellis, William Carswell, David Wallace, and David Grieve, elders.

The result of the General Associate synod's deliberations on this important business was communicated to the moderator of the Associate synod, in the following letter:—

*"Stirling, 20th May, 1819.*

"REVEREND SIR,—I had the honour of receiving your most gratifying communication, of the 30th April last, announcing the measures adopted by the Associate synod, in consequence of numerous petitions from the congregations under their inspection, for effecting a union of the two great bodies of the Secession Church; and, having read your letter to the General Associate synod, at their meeting last week, I was directed to inform you, that it was heard with the deepest and most respectful interest, and ordered to be preserved in the records of the court.

"The synod having received upwards of ninety petitions from different congregations,\* all breathing the warmest desires for union, and having at great length, and various sittings, and after repeatedly joining in prayer and thanksgiving to God, considered this most important subject, unanimously agreed in appointing a committee of sixteen ministers, and five elders, to act in concert with the committee of the same number, appointed by the Associate synod, in preparing the basis of a union of the two bodies, empowering their committee to appoint a sub-committee, and nominating the Rev. Robert

\* No more than seventy-four congregations are mentioned in the Synod record as having presented petitions.

Culbertson, of Leith, their convener, who will correspond with the convener of the committee appointed by the Associate synod.

"With those ardent and pious feelings in relation to this extraordinary and extensive disposition to union, with which, as an individual, you close your communication, permit me, in the same character, to say, that I desire most cordially to coincide, and to express my earnest wishes, and my sanguine hopes, that this great and simultaneous impulse, which so many Christians in our native land have received in favour of visible fellowship among the friends of evangelical truth and order, may, under the guidance of the Spirit of our common Lord, be speedily consummated to his glory, and the enlargement and joy of his church.

"With my most affectionate regard for yourself, as a brother in Christ, and a fellow-servant in the gospel, and for the interest of religion in the association of which you are a member, I remain, yours, &c.

"HUGH HEUGH, *Moderator.*"

"To the Rev. George Young, Moderator  
of the Associate Synod."

The united committee met at Edinburgh, on the 17th of June. All the members, with the exception of Mr. Greig, were present. Dr. Husband presided as chairman, and Dr. Black officiated as clerk. A letter was presented to the meeting, from a committee of the Original Burgher (Old Light) synod, stating that a committee had been appointed by said synod, "to collect information, and to correspond with all the bodies of the Secession that are using means to accomplish the proposed union." After some deliberation, the united committee agreed that an answer should be returned to this communication, to the following effect:—"That, being appointed for the purpose of effecting a union betwixt the Associate synod and the General Associate synod, they would exceed their powers were they at present to admit a committee from any other body or party to the discussion."

Before entering upon the consideration of the business which had brought them together, they agreed to spend some time in praise and prayer. A portion of the 102d Psalm was sung, and Mr. Alexander Pringle prayed. A long and friendly conference ensued. It was, in some respects, both a difficult and a delicate task which they were required to perform. To break the first ground, in such a discussion, must have been felt by all the members to be a matter involving in it great responsibility, because the opening speeches were likely to give a peculiar direction or tone to the whole of the ensuing proceedings. On the one hand, it was necessary that there should be, on the part of the speakers, perfect openness and frankness in the statement of their sentiments; and, on the other, it was no less necessary to avoid making such allusion to past controversies as was fitted to awaken in the bosom feelings which had now, for a considerable period, been permitted to slumber. Never was there an occasion when men were assembled to deliberate on any question, where the suc-

cessful issue of the deliberations depended more on a happy combination of honesty and candour, with caution and kindness. I may add, that both synods were well-directed in the choice of their respective committees; for, when they were assembled together, in one deliberative society, there was diffused among them a large portion of high intellectual talent, sterling honesty of purpose, enlightened Christian principle, generous warmth of affection, and profound acquaintance with the constitution of the Christian church, and with the various forms of ecclesiastical polity. The project of a union, which they were met to discuss, could not have been placed in better hands. Dr. Hall led the way in the discussion. He was followed by Mr. Pringle. Then the other members delivered their sentiments. There were few, if any present, who did not state their opinion. There prevailed among all the speakers the greatest cordiality and frankness. The views of each were freely propounded, and freely discussed. On almost all the doctrinal and practical points that passed under review, there existed a great cordiality of feeling, and harmony of opinion. After a friendly and most confidential discussion, which lasted for several hours, a sub-committee was appointed to embody the views which had been expressed, in an overture, which they were to present to the meeting, at their next sederunt. In the mean time, a short adjournment took place.

When the brethren met in the evening, the sub-committee laid before them the articles which were designed to serve as the ground-work of a basis of union. These articles were fully and freely discussed at several meetings; and, after undergoing a careful revision, they were unanimously adopted by the committee, without a single dissent being recorded.

On the 8th of September, the Basis of Union was laid on the table of the Associate synod, by their committee. The synod were much gratified with the result of their committee's labours. They appointed their moderator to return thanks to them for the important services which they had performed; and they were peculiarly gratified to learn, that "the utmost cordiality and candour, and an amicable conciliating spirit had been manifested on the part of the members of the committee, from the General Associate synod." Impressed with the importance of the work in which they were about to engage, they considered it necessary, before entering on the discussion of the principles of the Basis, to spend some time in praise and prayer. A few verses of the 60th Psalm (at the beginning), were sung, and Mr. Greig offered up solemn prayer, expressing in fervent language the thanksgivings of the synod, and imploring the divine direction in their future

deliberations. The impression produced by these religious exercises, in which a large auditory joined, was so deep and powerful, that the synod judged it not unnecessary to mention in their record, "these devotional exercises seemed to be attended with an uncommon degree of religious feeling and animation."

The synod then reviewed, one by one, the articles of the Basis; and, with the exception of a qualifying clause, inserted in one of them, they were severally adopted in the exact form and language in which they had been presented by the committee. At the close of their deliberations, which were characterized by a most remarkable harmony, they again united in praise and thanksgiving to God. Dr. Waugh of London conducted the devotions of the grateful assembly. A deputation of ministers and elders was appointed by them, to repair to the General Associate synod, who were sitting at the same time in Edinburgh, to intimate to them, that the Basis of Union had received the sanction of the Associate synod.

Several sederunts were spent by the General Associate synod, in reviewing the articles of the Basis; and, after having completed their review, they considered it proper to delay, till a future meeting, giving their final sanction to them. The following was the motion which the synod adopted at the close of their deliberations:—"The synod having considered the articles of Basis proposed by the joint committee, so far agreed to them as a Basis of Union, as to transmit them to the several presbyteries, to be under their consideration till meeting of synod." They then appointed a deputation of ministers and elders to repair to the Associate next synod, and to inform them of the resolution which they had adopted.

The meeting of this deputation with the Associate synod, was a very interesting one. Dr. John Jamieson of Edinburgh addressed the synod in name of the brethren who accompanied him, and stated that the General Associate synod, whom they represented, had so far approved of the articles of the Basis of Union, as to send them down to presbyteries, to be under their consideration till their next meeting. The Associate synod received with joy this communication; and, strongly impressed with the gracious agency of God, in conducting to its present issue the important business in which both synods were engaged, requested the members of the deputation to unite with them in the exercises of praise and prayer. With this request the brethren cheerfully complied. Dr. Alexander Pringle of Perth, a member of the General synod, commenced the devotional services, by giving out a

few verses at the beginning of the 85th Psalm, which were sung by the assembly. He then offered up fervent supplication to God, in behalf of the two synods, and the congregations connected with them, and for the divine blessing to rest on the endeavours which they were making to unite the two branches of the Secession into one; after which the 2d and 3d verses of the 98th Psalm were sung. Dr. Pringle then requested, that a member of the Associate synod might also be employed in offering up prayer, to render the communion of the two bodies more complete, when Mr. John Brown of Whitburn was called upon to engage in this exercise, which he did with great fervour and simplicity. These solemn exercises were concluded by the worshipping assembly singing a portion of the 102d Psalm. During the whole of these services, a spirit of devotion appeared to be poured out, in a remarkable manner, upon both ministers and people. Many of the audience were melted into tears. It was indeed a time of refreshing from the presence of the Lord.

At the next meeting of the General Associate synod, in spring 1820, the articles of union were again discussed *seriatim*. Several alterations were proposed and adopted. These alterations consisted chiefly in the introduction of words and clauses, for the purpose either of rendering the meaning more definite, where it might be somewhat vague, or of qualifying statements that might be too strongly expressed. In those cases where new propositions were suggested and adopted, no change was produced by them in the general principles on which the Basis of Union was formed. These remained untouched. During the course of these discussions, several dissents were recorded, and leave was occasionally asked that "the door might be left open" for future "exoneration."

On the 25th of April, all the articles of the Basis, after being reviewed and corrected, were finally sanctioned by the General Associate synod, and a deputation was appointed to give intimation to the Associate synod, that the Basis of Union had been accepted, and to request their acquiescence in the alterations that had been made. These alterations being considered by the Associate synod, were approved of. One of the alterations required that the words, "*only form*," be inserted in the article respecting the presbyterian form of church government. Three ministers craved to have it marked, that they dissented from the adopting of these words; and they stated that their object in wishing to have their dissent recorded was, that they might not be thought inconsistent, should they plead for a modification of this article, when it should be incorporated in the Formula. Another minister dissented from the article on the subject of public covenanting.

With these exceptions, the alterations were unanimously adopted.

The following is the Basis of Union, as adopted by both synods, in its corrected state :—

“ Without interfering with the right of private judgment respecting the grounds of separation, both parties shall carefully abstain from agitating, in future, the questions which occasioned it; and, with regard to the burgess-oath, both synods agree to use what may appear to them the most proper means for obtaining the abolition of that religious clause, which occasioned the religious strife, in those towns where it may still exist.

“ Art. I. We hold the Word of God, contained in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, as the only rule of faith and manners.

“ Art. II. We retain the Westminster Confession of Faith, with the Larger and Shorter Catechisms, as the confession of our faith, expressive of the sense in which we understand the Holy Scriptures,—it being always understood, however, that we do not approve or require an approbation of any thing in those books, or in any other, which teaches, or may be thought to teach, compulsory or persecuting and intolerant principles of religion.

“ NOTE.—In elucidation of this article respecting passages in our standard-books, and in the deeds of our church, which imply, or have been interpreted to imply, that the magistrate may use coercive measures in matters of religious profession; we remark, that, while we grant the magistrate's right to restrain and punish whatever, under pretence even of religion, violates the order of civil society, we disapprove of compulsion in things religious, and of all persecution for conscience's sake. And we farther state, that, though we do not require uniformity of sentiment on the subject of the magistrate's power about ecclesiastical affairs, we adhere to the doctrines formerly stated by the Associate Presbytery, in 1743, viz. That the public good of outward and common order, in all reasonable society, unto the glory of God, is the great and only end which those invested with magistracy can propose, in a sole respect unto that office; and as, in prosecuting this end civilly, according to their office, it is only over men's good and evil works that they can have any inspection, so it is only over those which they must needs take cognizance for the said public good; while, at the same time, their doing so must be in such a manner, and proceed so far alienarly, as is requisite for that end, without assuming any lordship immediately over men's consciences, or making any encroachment upon the special privileges and business of the church.

“ And we take this opportunity of avowing our adherence to the presbytery's doctrine, viz. ‘ That we ought to acknowledge the present civil government of these nations, and subjection thereto in lawful commands.’

“ Art. III. The Presbyterian form of church government, without any superiority of office to that of a teaching presbyter, and in a due subordination of church judicatories, being the only form of government which we acknowledge, as

founded upon, and agreeable to, the Word of God, shall be the government of the United Church; and the Directory, as heretofore, shall be retained as a compilation of excellent rules.

“ Art. IV. We consider as valid those reasons of Secession from the prevailing party in the judicatories of the Established Church, which are stated in the Testimony that was approved of, and published by, the Associate Presbytery; particularly the sufferance of error without adequate censure; the settling of ministers by patronage, even in reclaiming congregations; the neglect or relaxation of discipline; the restraint of ministerial freedom in testifying against maladministration; the refusal of that party to be reclaimed. And we find the grounds of Secession from the judicatories of the Established Church in some respects increased, instead of being diminished.

“ Art. V. We cherish an unfeigned veneration for our reforming ancestors, and a deep sense of the inestimable value of the benefits which accrue to us, from their noble and successful efforts in the cause of civil and religious liberty. We approve of the method adopted by them for mutual excitement and encouragement, by solemn confederation and vows to God. We acknowledge that we are under high obligations to maintain and prosecute the work of reformation begun, and to a great extent carried on, by them; and we assert, that public religious vowing or covenanting, is a moral duty, to be practised when the circumstances of Providence require it; but as the duty, from its nature, is occasional, not stated, and as there is, and may be, a diversity of sentiment respecting the seasonableness of it, we agree that, while no obstruction shall be thrown in the way, but every scriptural facility shall be afforded to those who have clearness to proceed in it, yet its observance shall not be required of any, in order to church communion.

“ Art. VI. A Formula shall be made up from the Formulas already existing, suited to the United Secession Church.

“ NOTE.—That it be recommended to the United Synod, to prepare, as soon as possible, a more detailed view of the above articles, as the Testimony of the United Church, containing the substance of the Judicial Testimony, the Act concerning the Doctrine of Grace, and the Answers to Nairn's Reasons of Dissent.”

When the deputation above referred to, appeared in the Associate synod, and announced the acceptance of the articles of union by the General Associate synod, with the alterations that had been made, they were requested by their brethren to unite with them in praise and supplication. With this request they cheerfully complied. After a portion of the

103d Psalm had been sung, Dr. Mitchell, a member of the deputation, offered up prayer to God; and the solemn service was concluded by the audience singing the 133d Psalm.

All the preliminaries of the union being now settled, the Associate synod unanimously agreed to declare, "that, as the two synods are now fully united in principle, there cannot exist any cause to prevent the exercise of ministerial and Christian communion:" and they sent a deputation to their brethren of the other synod, "to give them assurance that this synod rejoices because the happy period has now arrived, when the two great bodies of the Secession Church may hold ministerial and Christian communion with one another." This message produced a feeling of joy in the General Associate synod; and the deputation were requested to engage, along with the synod, in the exercises of praise and thanksgiving. Both synods re-appointed their respective committees to meet with each other during the summer, and to make such arrangements as might be necessary for the full completion of the union in the month of September.

Mention has been made, that during the progress of the discussions on the Basis of Union, in the General Associate synod, several dissents were recorded; and leave was asked that "the door might be left open for future exoneration." There was a small portion of the members of that synod, who did not acquiesce in the articles of union, and who dissented from the decision of their brethren, adopting these articles. At the close of the proceedings, when the synod appointed a deputation to intimate to their brethren of the Associate synod, that they had reviewed, and agreed to, all the articles in the Basis of Union, a formal protestation was made against this deed. In this protestation, Mr. George Stevenson, minister at Ayr, took the lead. The following paper, presented by him to the synod (and which was recorded in their minutes), will show what were the reasons which influenced him, and the brethren who acted along with him, in opposing the deed of synod, adopting the Basis of Union:—

"I, George Stevenson, minister of the gospel at Ayr, do solemnly protest against this deed of synod, respecting the Basis of Union, in its present form, and against proceeding to union with our brethren of the Associate synod, upon said Basis, for the following, among other reasons, to be given in to this synod, more in detail, at a subsequent meeting, if found necessary. *First*, because, according to said Basis, our relation to, and connexion with, the covenanting Church of Scotland are not recognised as in the former constitutional documents of the Secession Church. *Secondly*, because it is understood that the Narrative and Testimony, from the moment of

union, ceases to be of public authority as a standard-book among us; while, at the same time, we have no Testimony substituted in its room, recognising the attainments of our reforming ancestors, and condemning the several steps of defection from these attainments, both in present and former times.

*Thirdly*, because no suitable provision is made by this Basis for guarding the union church against what is called free communion; and because the purity of her fellowship is not protected by a pointed Testimony against several sinful and ensnaring oaths, and against those fashionable amusements, so inconsistent with Christian sobriety, which were formerly condemned by this church. *Fourthly*, as it lays an insuperable bar in the way of proceeding in the duty of public religious covenanting, as heretofore, since we are not warranted to expect a bond for that purpose, authorized by the supreme court of the union church. *Lastly*, because sufficient time has not been given, nor means employed, for informing the church diffusive of the important change about to take place in their public profession, so as to enable them to act with judgment in a matter in which their consciences are so deeply interested: And I do protest, that I shall be at liberty, notwithstanding this vote, or the proceedings arising out of it, on all proper occasions, in the discharge of all my official duties, to maintain and propagate the principles of the Secession Church, as laid down in her Testimonies, and recognised in my ordination vows; on all which I take instruments, and crave extracts.

“GEORGE STEVENSON.”

“*Edinburgh, 28th April, 1820.*”

To this protestation was appended the following note, with the names of the undersigned members:—

“We, subscribers, having engaged in the same protestation, do hereby adhere to the above reasons, and claim the same privileges.

“GEORGE PAXTON, minister,

“RICHARD BLACK, minister, Perth.

“ROBERT SMITH, minister, Kilwinning.

“JAMES GRAY, minister, Brechin.

“THOMAS GRAY, minister, Kirkcaldy.

“JAMES AIRD, minister, Rattray.

“PETER M'DERMAID, minister.

“WILLIAM M'EWAN, minister, Howgate.”

There were a few of the brethren, besides those whose names are here mentioned, who dissented from some of the articles of union, though they did not consider it their duty to

carry their opposition farther; and two of the ministers, whose names are appended to this protest (Messrs. James Aird and William M'Ewan), afterwards acquiesced in the union.

During the summer of 1820, much brotherly intercourse was carried on between the ministers and people belonging to the two synods. The ministers preached in one another's pulpits, and the people flocked to the sacramental occasions; so that the crowds which assembled at the *tent-preachings*, which were then common over the whole country, were larger than they had been at almost any former period. All were delighted that the middle wall of partition had been broken down between the two large bodies of the Secession, and that they would soon be reunited into one religious community. Many churchmen took a deep interest in this approaching consummation. They regarded the religious movement which was taking place throughout the Secession, as the harbinger of a more extensive union among the various sections of the church of Christ. A desire was manifested, in several quarters, to remove any obstacles that might obstruct the progress of the union. In some instances, the town-councils of burghs abolished the religious clause of the oath, which had occasioned the disunion;\* and the Convention of Royal Burghs, with a liberality of spirit which did them honour, unanimously recommended, without any solicitation on the part of the Seceders, its entire abolition, for the express purpose of facilitating the consummation of this desirable event.

On the 5th of September, the Associate and the General Associate synods assembled at Edinburgh. The former held their meeting in Portsburgh Church, and the latter in their synod-house, in Nicolson-street. There was a numerous attendance of members in both synods. There were enrolled as present, in the Associate synod, 106 ministers, and 62 elders; and, in the General Associate, there were enrolled 76 ministers, and 36 elders.† Two days were spent by each synod in determining such causes, as it was proper for them to decide in their separate ecclesiastical capacity; and all the necessary arrangements being completed, it was resolved, that the union should take place formally on Friday, the 8th of September. The magistrates of Portsburgh politely offered to accompany, in their official robes, the Associate synod to the place of union, but the offer was respectfully declined. Bristo-street Church, being the spot where the separation had taken place seventy-three years before this, was appropriately selected as the scene

\* This was the case in Glasgow and Paisley.

† The number of ministers connected with the Associate synod, at the period of the reunion, was 139; and the number belonging to the General Associate, was 123; making a total of 262.

of this noble exhibition of the power of Christian love. Here the two synods resolved to drop forever their distinctive badges, and to become one in profession, as they were already one in sentiment.

On the day appointed, at half-past twelve o'clock, the members of these ecclesiastical judicatories walked in regular procession, from the above-mentioned places of meeting to Bristo-street Church. First in order were the ministers, then the elders, next the probationers, and after these moved the students of divinity. A portion of the church was railed in, for the reception of the two synods; the members of which were seated in alternate pews, so that they might be completely intermingled. The two moderators were seated in front of the pulpit, with the two clerks at a little distance on the right and left. The church was crowded in every part by an immense assemblage, anxious to witness the solemn proceedings of such an eventful meeting.

After all were properly seated, the Rev. Dr. Jamieson of Edinburgh, the senior moderator (belonging to the General Associate synod), rose and gave out a portion of the 102d Psalm (17—22 verses), in singing which the ministers and elders, and whole attending multitude joined. After the Psalm was sung, he called upon the clerk of the synod, whom he represented, to read their last minute. This being done, the Rev. Mr. Balmer of Berwick, the junior moderator (belonging to the Associate synod), rose and called upon the clerk of the synod with which he was connected, to read their last minute. This minute, which was read by each clerk, being prepared with a special view to the union, was expressed in similar terms, and was to the following effect:—

“ The General Associate synod (or the Associate synod), having accepted the Basis of Union, and having by the good hand of God upon them now finished all their own business, and all preparatory arrangements, they with fervent gratitude to God, for having led them thus far, and in humble dependence on his grace to bless the solemn and interesting step which they are now about to take, and enable them to improve the privileges, and discharge the duties which are about to devolve in consequence of it, do resolve, and hereby record their resolution, forthwith to repair to the appointed place, that they may unite with their brethren of the other synod, to be known by the name of THE UNITED ASSOCIATE SYNOD OF THE SECESSION CHURCH, composed of the *Associate* (commonly called Burgher) *Synod*, and of the *General Associate* (commonly called Antiburgher) *Synod*, that they may henceforth walk with them in the fear of God, and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost, striving together for the faith of the gospel, for

the purity of divine ordinances, and for the enlargement of the church of Christ."

After the reading of this minute by the clerks of the two synods, all the members rose and stood while the articles of the Basis of Union were being read. The senior moderator then said, "I declare in the name of the General Associate synod, whom I represent, that the General Associate synod is henceforth one with the Associate synod." The junior moderator made a similar declaration in name of the Associate synod whom he represented. After this mutual declaration, the two moderators gave to one another the right hand of fellowship. In this expression of brotherly love they were followed by all the ministers and elders belonging to the two synods. While they were thus, amid the gaze of a numerous and delighted audience, recognising each other in silence, as brethren in Christ, and while they were pledging themselves, by the firm grasp and the hearty shake of the hand, to walk together for the future in the fellowship of the gospel, it is impossible to express the feelings which such a scene produced. Tears of joy were shed by not a few. If we may be permitted to suppose that the disembodied spirits of those good men, who were present in Bristo-street Church when the separation took place, contemplated this interesting sight from their abodes of glory, or were made acquainted with it by the instrumentality of angels, it is not drawing too much upon the imagination of the reader to affirm, that the knowledge of such an event, in whatever way derived, would give increased intensity to their happiness, and would furnish them with a theme of devout and grateful acknowledgment to their exalted Redeemer in heaven.

Mr. David Greig of Lochgelly, being the oldest minister present, was called upon by the United Associate synod to take the chair as moderator. Mr. Greig, having taken the chair, gave out the 133d Psalm, which was sung by the audience; after which, he constituted the court with prayer. Dr. Alexander Pringle, of Perth, being next in seniority, as a minister, to Mr. Greig, ascended the pulpit, gave out a portion of the 90th Psalm (13—17 verses) and then offered up supplication and thanksgiving to God. He was succeeded by Dr. James Hall, of Edinburgh, who read the 17th chapter of John's Gospel, sung the last three verses of the 72d Psalm, and prayed. These solemn and most delightful exercises were concluded by the ministers and assembled multitude singing the beautiful and appropriate lines at the beginning of the 147th Psalm:—

" Praise ye the Lord ; for it is good  
 Praise to our God to sing :  
 For it is pleasant, and to praise  
 It is a comely thing.

" God doth build up Jerusalem ;  
 And he it is alone  
 That the dispersed of Israel  
 Doth gather into one," &c. &c.

After the devotional exercises were concluded, the roll of the United synod was called ; and committees were appointed to make a new arrangement of the presbyteries, to prepare a list of the probationers, and to make an equitable distribution of their services among the vacant congregations. The synod, without entering on any other business, then adjourned to meet on Tuesday, the following week.\*

The reunion of these two synods, after a separation of seventy-three years, whether viewed in itself, or contemplated in reference to its results, must be regarded as a most important event. It has hitherto been a matter of reproach against the Christian church, that its repose should have been so often disturbed, and its prosperity marred, by divisions amongst its friends. From this reproach the Secession section of the visible church cannot claim exemption. The preceding pages show, that, in more than one instance, it has had to mourn over the disruption of its communion. But if, in the course of its history, instances occur of angry contention amongst brethren, and of a separation taking place amongst those who had long been united together in the sacred bond of the gospel, it is pleasing to find, in the happy consummation of the event which has now been recorded, such a noble display given of the power of Christianity. It bears a close resemblance, both in the causes which led to it, and in the truly Christian spirit in which it was consummated, to one of those remarkable pentecostal scenes described in the early annals of the Christian church. Among the many great events of a religious kind, which have taken place during the present generation, and which stamp a peculiar aspect on the times in which we live, it will be difficult to find one in which the finger of the great Head of the church has been more visibly displayed, than that which is here recorded. The length of time during which the parties had been in a state of separation, the vast importance which, at one period, was at-

\* It is an interesting fact, worthy of being recorded, that an aged elder, of the name of Andrew Oliphant, belonging to the Rev. Dr. Mitchell's congregation, Wellington-street, Glasgow, saw the division of the Associate synod in 1747, and witnessed its reunion in 1820. The good man rejoiced when this event took place. He was so interested in it that he did not sleep for several nights. He died at the advanced age of ninety-six.

tached to the points at issue, the keenness (not to make use of a stronger term) with which those points were agitated, the feelings of animosity which had been produced, and the spirit of rivalry which had been excited, all these were circumstances which rendered a reunion of the contending parties an event highly improbable. Yet the movements, which terminated in the full accomplishment of this desirable measure, were so unexpected, so rapid, so general, and at the same time so harmonious, that no pious mind could fail to be impressed with the idea that the Spirit of God was the moving cause. Every reflecting individual who took an interest in these movements, and who witnessed their triumphant progress, and happy results, must have been ready to exclaim, "Truly this is the doing of the Lord!"

The way was prepared in a remarkable manner, by the course of events, for the effecting of this union. Obstacles were unexpectedly removed. No compromise of principle was made by either party. The abolition of the obnoxious clause in the burgess-oath, by the town councils, removed all danger of future discussion on this point. So complete was the spirit of union that pervaded the two bodies, that of the Associate synod there was not one minister, who did not become a member of the United synod; and of the General Associate synod there were only a few, a very few (as we shall afterwards see), who, for reasons satisfactory to themselves, considered it their duty to stand aloof, after the union was accomplished.

On the whole, I cannot but consider this memorable event, taking place at the time it did, as designed, in the providence of God, to give increased energy and influence to the Secession Church; that it might thereby be the better prepared for acting a prominent and decided part in those great religious movements, of which our country is now the theatre, and which bid fair, at no distant period, to give a powerful impulse to the progress of the gospel, both at home and abroad, and thus to effect an extensive amelioration in the moral condition of the nations of the world.

## **PART III.**

**CONTAINING THE HISTORY OF THE SECESSION FROM  
THE PERIOD OF THE REUNION TILL THE  
PRESENT TIME.**

## CHAPTER XX.

Aspect of the present times—Exciting events taking place—Influence of United Secession Church—First meeting of Synod after union—Papers presented by protesters—Summary of Principles published—New Formula—Pastoral address to the people—Final resolution of protesters—Declaration of Synod on subject—Professor Paxton and other ministers leave the Synod—Committee on theological tuition—Home missions appointed—Correspondence with Irish Synod—Deputation to Ireland—Account of their proceedings—Irish brethren send deputation to United Synod—Mission to Gibraltar—Visit of George the Fourth to Scotland—Synod agree to present a loyal address—Petition to parliament for abolition of slavery—Bill affecting the interests of Secession poor—Bill opposed by Synod—Legal opinion concerning maintenance of poor—Case of Mr. Smith the missionary—Resolution of Synod respecting it—Dr. Mitchell elected Biblical Professor—Rev. Caesar Malan admitted a member of Synod—Correspondence with him—New Testimony adopted—And published—Pictou Academy—Opposition made to it—Receives support from United Synod—Sum raised for it by Secession Students—Charter remodelled—Gives dissatisfaction—Death of Professor Dick—His character—Extended plan of theological tuition—Three new Professors chosen—Curriculum of study—General Assembly of America—Letter from Assembly to the Synod—Rev. Dr. Cox—Congregational Union of England and Wales—Letter from Union to the Synod—Synod's answer—Deputation from Union to Synod—Rev. John Burnet—Deputation to Union—Proposed Union with Relief Church—Declaration of Synod concerning stipends—Enactment concerning competing calls—Elders from vacant congregations to sit in church courts—Extended plan of missionary operations—Home missions—Mission to Canada—Missions to Jamaica and Trinidad—Rev. William Glen—Employed as translator of the Scriptures into the Persian language—Rev. John Monnard missioned to France—His death—Rev. Charles F. Major, of Strasburg—Employed by Synod on the continent—Mission to Shetland Isles—Secession in Lerwick—Mission fund—Remarks.

THOUGH the period which this portion of the Secession History embraces is short, yet events have taken place during the course of it which possess a deep interest. The extraordinary movements that have been made, during the last twenty years, and that are now making, both in the religious and in the political worlds, indicate the near approach of some great crisis in human affairs. He must be a very inattentive observer of the present course of events, who does not perceive that changes of no ordinary kind are taking place in the frame-work of society; and that, at no distant period, corresponding changes must be made in existing institutions, to suit them to the altered position and circumstances of the parties for whose benefit these institutions are professedly intended. As I am a firm believer in the progressive amelioration of society, and regard the various events, that are passing over

us, as the machinery which providence is employing to bring about the arrival of the millennial era, instead of contemplating these events with a feeling of anxiety or dread, I look upon them as the harbingers of good to the church of Christ, as designed to usher in a brighter day in our world's history than any that it has yet seen.

In looking back upon the past, we do not find that any decided step has ever been taken in advance, along the path either of social or of religious improvement, which has not been accompanied or preceded by a severe struggle, in consequence of contending principles coming into collision. In confirmation of this remark, we may appeal to the terrible commotion which was produced amongst the nations of the world, by the introduction of Christianity itself, one of the greatest blessings, certainly, which Heaven has conferred upon our earth. The first preachers of that divine and peaceful system, we know, were accused of turning the world upside down. They were regarded, by the influential classes, as disturbers of the public peace, as wild enthusiasts, as selfish, designing men, whom it was necessary to put down by the strong arm of power; and the infant church had to sustain a series of bloody persecutions, before it was permitted to enjoy any thing like repose. Another confirmation of the statement that has been made may be found in the convulsions, which were occasioned among the nations of Europe, by the rekindling of the torch of truth at the period of the Reformation. Those venerable men who, under the guidance of heaven, took the lead in this noble work, did so at the peril of their lives. They, too, were accused of being disturbers of the peace. They were branded as heretics, and enemies of religion. When argument failed in putting them down, recourse was had to the sword. Europe became the theatre of wars carried on in the sacred name of religion; and the Reformation was cradled amid the din of arms and the shouts of the battle-field. In looking again at the page of history, we find another instance, illustrative of the position that has been advanced, in the stern and long-continued struggles which preceded and accompanied the overthrow of civil and ecclesiastical despotism, at the period of the Revolution, in our own country. For at least half a century before that memorable event took place, there were great heavings in society, and master minds were at work unfolding and inculcating principles that were favourable to the cause of freedom. There was also a plentiful supply of nick-names and of abuse lavished upon those who had the honesty and the courage to make themselves singular, by espousing opinions that were comparatively new. But more than this, that never-failing argument

of tyrants, the sword, was repeatedly employed to arrest the progress of society, that not a single movement should be made in advance, except what the minions of power should be pleased to permit. Yet advance it did, in spite of them. Opinion proved more powerful than the sword. After the public mind had become fairly leavened with the wholesome truths which had been taught, the old fabric fell with a crash to the ground; and a new one, considerably improved, though by no means perfect, was erected in its stead.

Another of these epochs in a nation's history has arrived. A war of opinion has again commenced in our country. The combatants are taking their ground calmly and deliberately. Society has begun to heave with one of those convulsive struggles, which a collision of principle never fails to produce, where freedom of expression is allowed. It will assuredly happen in this, as in the instances already mentioned. The victory will not be decided either by abuse or by violence; but truth and justice, on whichever side these may lie, will ultimately prove triumphant. The reunion of the Secession Church has greatly increased its power and influence; and the remaining pages of this narrative will furnish ample proof, that the Secession has not regarded with indifference those exciting events, which have taken place in this portion of the empire, since the period of the reunion. Notwithstanding the disadvantages which the Secession has had to contend with, as a dissenting community, it has exercised a considerable influence, both directly and indirectly, in accelerating the progress of these events. Its ministers and people have shown themselves, in their united state, as they did when existing in a state of separation, the decided friends of all those measures which have been proposed to ameliorate the institutions of the country.

When the United Associate synod assembled, the week after the union took place, several members, who had protested in the General synod against forming a union upon the Basis as agreed to, "from a persuasion that it was defective, or not such as it ought to have been," presented a paper, in which they stated, "that they were not satisfied that they ought, at present, to carry their protest so far as to decline communion with those who had united;" but, in order to give relief to their consciences, they wished the following declaration to be inserted in the record:—"That, in acceding to the union, they did so in the way of reserving and holding it as their right, and duty, and privilege, to teach, preach, and maintain all the same doctrines, the same mode of worship, and laws of religion, which they had hitherto done, and which they considered themselves bound to by their ordination vows."

Another paper was presented by a few individuals, who had also protested in the General synod against the union. In this paper, they craved to have it marked, "that they did not fall from their protest, and had not freedom in their own minds to enter immediately into the measure of union, as proposed in the Basis." They stated that there were some points on which their minds were much relieved, while there were others with regard to which they were not yet satisfied. At the same time, they begged leave to explain, "that they did not intend, by this paper, to state a separation from their brethren, with whom they had lived in fellowship, nor to shut the door against their own concurrence in the union, which afterwards may appear to them satisfactory."

As it was declared, in the fifth article of the Basis, that while covenanting should not be required, in order to church communion, yet no obstruction should be thrown in the way, but every scriptural facility afforded to those who might have clearness to proceed in it; so a bond, prepared and transmitted by the General Associate synod, was adopted by the United synod, and inserted in their record, to be made use of by those congregations that had "clearness to proceed" in this work. This bond is the same in spirit and in language (though somewhat abbreviated) as that which was employed by the General Associate synod in 1805, when they engaged in the work of covenanting.

An exhibition of the principles held by the United synod, having been previously prepared by committee, was submitted to the consideration of the synod; and, being carefully revised by them, was unanimously adopted. This excellent and most useful compendium was published under the title of "Summary of Principles, agreed upon by the United Associate synod of the Secession Church, September 14, 1820." The synod agreed, "That this paper is to be regarded as a compendious exhibition of our principles, and as a directory for the admission of members, who are to be considered as acceding to the principles contained in this Summary, according to the measure of their knowledge."

The union committee had prepared a new Formula of Questions, to be employed in licensing preachers, and in ordaining ministers and elders. This Formula, after being revised and corrected by the United synod, was adopted, though not unanimously. Some of the questions in it occasioned considerable diversity of opinion, and underwent much discussion. Eleven ministers and one elder dissented from the particular phraseology employed in the third question, which required an acknowledgment of the presbyterian form of church government, as the *only* form "founded upon, and agreeable to,

the word of God." Sixteen ministers and one elder dissented from the adopting of the fourth question, which requires an acknowledgment, "that public religious vowing or covenanting is a moral duty, to be practised when the circumstances of providence require it;" and also an approbation "of the method adopted by our reforming ancestors, for mutual excitement and encouragement, by solemn confederation and vows to God."

An excellent Pastoral Address to the people under the inspection of the synod, on the subject of the union, was read; and, after being submitted to the revision of a committee, the synod agreed that ten thousand copies of it should be printed and circulated among the congregations. This Address breathes a truly catholic spirit, and could not fail to have a happy influence in promoting a feeling of brotherly affection among the people, and in cementing the bond of union which had been formed.

Agreeably to the recommendation contained in a note annexed to the Basis, a committee was appointed to prepare a more detailed view of the articles of the Basis, as the Testimony of the United Church, containing the substance of the Judicial Act and Testimony, the Act concerning the doctrine of grace, and Answers to Nairn's Reasons of Dissent. The United synod concluded their first meeting by a very appropriate act, viz. recommending to all the congregations under their inspection, to observe, at an early opportunity, a day of thanksgiving to God for the union which had been so happily consummated.

Some of the brethren, who had not acceded to the union, transmitted to the synod, at their meeting in April 1821, two papers, containing a statement of their case, with a request that they might be read and considered. The papers were read, and a committee was appointed to converse with the brethren. One of the papers contained certain queries, to which these brethren wished answers to be returned. They expressed considerable anxiety about the forthcoming Testimony, and were desirous that some pledge should be given by the synod, with regard to the particulars which it should contain. The committee endeavoured to convince them, that it would be unreasonable to expect that the synod would give them any pledge on this subject, or that they would reconsider, at present, the terms of the union. But they proposed to the protesters, that they should draw up a concise statement of their sentiments on those points, concerning which they entertained doubts, and make a declaration of the terms on which they would be willing to accede to the union: and should the synod agree to record their statements (of which

they entertained little doubt), they might then conscientiously join the United Church; and, in that case, they would have an opportunity of assisting in the formation of the Testimony. The synod expressed their willingness to grant the indulgence which their committee proposed, in the hope that it would not be abused by the protesting brethren.

These brethren, however, did not think proper to acquiesce in the proposal that was thus made. Their final resolution was contained in the following communication, addressed by them to the moderator of the United Associate synod:—

“REV. AND DEAR SIR,—We subscribers are very sensible of the kindness and attention we have experienced from the United synod; but are obliged to say, that no personal exoneration can satisfy us, as it does not afford sufficient security for the maintenance of the public cause of the Secession. We beg leave to add, that so soon as the United synod shall exhibit a Testimony embodying the principles, and carrying forward the avowed design, of the Judicial Testimony, as the term of fellowship in the body, whatever steps we may find ourselves obliged to take in the mean time, we shall be ready, in that case, to accede to the union. We are, most respectfully,” &c.

“JAMES GRAY.  
ROBERT SMITH.  
GEORGE STEVENSON.  
JAMES TEMPLETON.

THOMAS GRAY.  
WILLIAM BEATH.  
JAMES AIRD.  
PETER M'DERMAID.”

The synod, after receiving this communication, expressed much regret that their brethren should decline co-operating with them on the terms proposed. They terminated their proceedings on this subject, by entering the following resolution on their record:—“That, while the synod is desirous to show all lenity to these brethren, it is bound to consult the edification of those members of their congregations, who approve of the union, and already consider themselves as members of the United Secession Church; and the synod refers it to the presbyteries, in whose bounds these congregations are, to grant such relief as they shall see proper.”

Professor Paxton was one of those who did not acquiesce in the union. He had, in the month of December, the pre-

\* Mr James Aird, one of the subscribers of the above letter, did not leave the United Secession Church. All the other ministers, whose names are affixed to the letter, withdrew from her communion; also Professor Paxton, Mr. William Mitchell of Clola, and Mr. Richard Black of Perth. They soon after this formed a union with that section of the Secession that withdrew from the General Associate synod, including Professor Bruce, Dr. M' Crie, &c. The two parties, united, are now known by the name of the “Associate synod of Original Seceders.” Mr. James Templeton of Aberdeen, one of the brethren who did not acquiesce in the union, a few years ago withdrew from the “Original Seceders,” and became a member of the United Associate synod.

ceding year (1820), sent a letter to the Edinburgh presbytery, stating that he could no longer take the charge of the Theological seminary. This letter was laid before the synod, at their present meeting. The synod agreed to accept of Mr. Paxton's resignation; and they appointed a committee to wait upon him, and communicate to him this resolution, and also to express to him their thanks for his past services. At the same time, they recorded in their minutes, "their well-founded approbation of the laborious, faithful, and disinterested manner in which he had fulfilled his duties, as Theological Tutor, under the late General Associate synod;" and they declared "their fullest conviction, that an unfeigned regard to the best interests of his pupils, and the welfare of the Secession Church alone, in opposition to any undue attachment to the emoluments of office, engaged him to continue in the discharge of its functions until the period at which he resigned it into the hands of the presbytery of Edinburgh, and through them into the hands of the United Associate synod." After some deliberation, it was considered advisable not to appoint a successor to Mr. Paxton at present; but a committee was appointed to take the subject of a second professorship into consideration, and to report at a future meeting. In the meantime, Dr. Dick was requested to take all the students of divinity under his charge during the ensuing session.

The United synod showed the interest which they took in the propagation of the gospel at home, by appointing, at this meeting, two of their members to itinerate during the summer months in the Orkney Islands; another member to preach in Dingwall, and itinerate in the neighbourhood; and a fourth to labour among the Gaelic population of the Western Highlands. They also gave a recommendation to the presbytery of Elgin to preach in those districts, within their bounds, where the inhabitants might stand most in need of the gospel; and they granted them a sum to defray the expenses that might thus be incurred.

The Rev. David Stuart of Dublin, a minister of the United Secession Church in Ireland, being present on this occasion, was invited to take his seat, and to correspond, as a member of the Irish United synod. A committee was appointed to hold a conference with him, concerning a proposal that was made to admit Irish students to study divinity in the Theological Seminary connected with the United synod in Scotland, and also to consider the mode of carrying on a friendly intercourse betwixt the sister synods of Scotland and Ireland. It was ultimately resolved, that the Irish students (if properly attested) should be permitted to attend the prelections of the Theological Professor, connected with the United Associate synod;

but that their enjoying this privilege would not entitle them to receive licence, with a view to their becoming preachers in this country. It was further resolved, as a means of maintaining a friendly intercourse with the United synod in Ireland, that a deputation should be sent to attend a meeting of that synod, which was to take place during the course of the summer. This deputation consisted of the Rev. Dr. Mitchell of Glasgow, and the Rev. Patrick Bradley of Lilliesleaf.\*

These brethren met with a most affectionate reception from the Irish synod. Giving an account of their embassy, at the first meeting of the United synod after their return home, they said:—"Your deputies were heard in explanation of the objects of their mission; and, on an occasion so extraordinary, and so deeply interesting, they could not avoid overstepping the mere forms of business, and giving utterance to the feelings of their hearts. The effect of the whole was solemn and melting. All were affected, and several were in tears; but they were tears of affection and joy. Your deputies could not but remember those 'times of refreshing from the presence of the Lord,' which preceded and accompanied that union in which we rejoice, and of which this our mission was one of the pleasing fruits. The spirit of love and of peace was present, and was powerfully operating. At that moment, the union of the two synods, in their new and conjunct character, was formed and sealed, in feeling and in purpose."

The Irish synod entered on their record the following resolution, expressive of the pleasure which they felt in being visited by the deputation from Scotland:—"The synod do hereby express our joy and gratitude for the communications transmitted by the Associate synod, Scotland, for the papers friendly forwarded, for the kind favour of sending a deputation to correspond with us. The synod do communicate our warmest thanks for the marked regards of the Associate synod to us, for their exertions in promoting the interests of the Secession in Ireland; and we do earnestly wish to maintain intimate correspondence with them, as a senior and sister church." They appointed three of their members—Messrs. James Rentoul, William Moorhead, and James Rankin—as a deputation to attend the meeting of the Scottish synod in the ensuing spring.

Two of these brethren—Messrs. Rentoul and Moorhead—attended the meeting of the synod in spring (Mr. Rankin was prevented by family affliction from being present), and gave an interesting account of the exertions of the Secession Church

\* The Rev. William Kidston of Glasgow was appointed a member of the deputation, but was unexpectedly prevented from accompanying them to Ireland.

in Ireland, in diffusing the knowledge of the gospel in that country. They also presented to the synod a copy of the articles of union between the two branches of the Secession in Ireland, and the subsequent minutes of their supreme court. The United synod expressed their great satisfaction with the exertions and success of their brethren in Ireland, in extending the kingdom of Christ; and they gave a recommendation to societies for religious purposes, connected with congregations under their inspection, to remember, in the division of their funds, the missions of the Secession Church, in that part of the United Kingdom.

In May 1822, an application was made, in name of some of the British residents at Gibraltar, for a minister, in connexion with the United Secession Church, to be sent to preach the gospel in that place. This application was referred to a committee, who were authorized to send a minister to Gibraltar, that he might ascertain the circumstances of the case, and make the necessary arrangements for a permanent supply of sermon being sent, should the information received, in answer to the committee's inquiries, be favourable. The person who undertook this mission, at the request of the committee, was Mr. James Pringle, minister at Newcastle,—an individual well qualified, by his talents and activity, for such an enterprise. Mr. Pringle, after labouring for several months at Gibraltar, was succeeded in the mission by Mr. Archibald Baird, minister at Auchtermuchty,\* whose popular talents and manners could not fail to render his services acceptable. The people in Gibraltar found that they could not command the funds necessary for defraying the expense connected with this mission; and they wrote to the committee, that unless the whole expenses were defrayed by the synod, they would be under the necessity of declining to receive any additional supply of preachers. The synod were deeply impressed with the importance of Gibraltar as a missionary station, and were anxious to give every encouragement to the promoting of the knowledge of the gospel in that place. But, as their missionary fund was not so copiously supplied at that period as it is now, they could not engage to bear the whole expense. They remitted the business to the committee formerly appointed, authorizing them to correspond with the people in Gibraltar, to encourage them in their exertions, and to send them a preacher so soon as might be deemed expedient. After the return of Mr. Baird, no other preacher was sent, and the correspondence between the synod and the people of Gibraltar ceased.

\* Now in Paisley.

In the month of August 1822, George IV. paid a visit to Scotland, and all classes vied with one another in expressions of loyalty to their sovereign. Addresses were poured in upon him from every quarter. At the first meeting of the United Associate synod, after the king's visit, a motion was brought forward, that a dutiful and loyal address should be presented to his Majesty. This motion was opposed, chiefly on the ground, that the synod, being an ecclesiastical court, and the representatives of a spiritual community, were not competent to present such an address; and, at all events, that there was no particular call for any such measure being adopted on the present occasion. A long discussion ensued. The opponents of the address, however, did not move a direct negative; they proposed only a delay; and the vote being taken on the question, "Shall the synod present an address to the King immediately, or delay?" it was carried, by a great majority, that an address should be immediately presented. From this decision of synod, ten ministers dissented. An address being drawn up by a committee, and having received the approbation of the synod, it was transmitted to his Majesty.

At the next meeting of synod, in the following spring, the attention of the court was drawn toward the evils of slavery; and they were required to throw their influence into the scale of humanity, by joining in the philanthropic movement that was then making for the entire abolition of this dreadful scourge. A motion was made, that a petition be presented to Parliament, "for the immediate mitigation, and ultimate abolition, of slavery throughout the British dominions." Some members were averse to petitioning Parliament on the subject; while, at the same time, they joined with their brethren in reprobating in the strongest terms, the iniquitous system of slavery, and in expressing their earnest desire for its total overthrow. They moved, "That the synod shall agree in expressing their deep abhorrence of slavery, and in recommending to the members of this court, and to those under their charge, to take all scriptural and habile means for turning the attention of the moral and religious public to this great evil, and to the fittest means for its speedy abolition." This last motion did not meet with general support. A large majority decided in favour of presenting a petition to Parliament. A petition was accordingly prepared, and, being subscribed by the moderator and clerk in name of the synod, was forwarded to the British legislature, calling upon them to adopt immediate measures for mitigating the evils of slavery, and to take steps for effecting its entire abolition, as soon as practicable. It was also earnestly recommended to all the congregations of the United Secession Church, to make a

general movement on this great question, and to take the earliest opportunity of presenting petitions to Parliament on this subject.

A bill was brought into Parliament, in the spring of 1824, entitled, "A bill to regulate the relief granted to the poor in Scotland." It was understood that the interest of the poor belonging to the Secession Church would be materially affected by this bill, should it be passed into a law. When the United synod met in April, the same year, they appointed a committee to take this bill into consideration, and to report what influence it would have upon the poor belonging to dissenting communities, and also what measures it might be necessary to adopt in reference to it. The report of the committee was, that a petition should be immediately presented to Parliament against the bill. The synod adopted this recommendation of their committee; and a petition was drawn out, subscribed by the members of synod, and transmitted to Parliament, craving that the bill might be rejected.

At this period complaints were made that in some parishes the kirk-sessions either refused to give any allowance to the Secession poor from the parochial funds, or that the alimant was given very partially, and sometimes with a threat that it would be withheld altogether. It was deemed necessary, for the information of ministers, especially of those residing in the country, to ascertain the exact state of the law of Scotland with regard to the maintenance of the poor. A memorial on the subject was prepared by a committee of synod, and submitted to the consideration of William Ellis, Esq., solicitor in Edinburgh, one of the law agents of the synod. The opinion which he returned, on account of the general importance of the subject to which it refers, I have considered deserving of a place in this record. It was to the following effect:—

'I beg leave humbly to submit as my opinion, that the poor of Seceder congregations are placed by law exactly upon the same footing with the poor of the Established Church; and if the heritors and elders of any congregation in Scotland were to refuse relief to a pauper, on the ground that he did not belong to the Established Church, the Court of Session would, upon being applied to, grant redress. The memorialists will be aware, that the right by which a pauper acquires a title to relief, arises either from being born in the parish, or a certain residence within its bounds. The law pays no respect to the religious opinions of the pauper, but looks merely to his poverty and inability to gain his bread. A few months ago, a case occurred in the Court of Session, where a meeting of the elders and heritors in the West of Scotland had refused to give relief to a pauper, because he was an Irishman,

although he had resided the legal time within the parish. The Court unanimously altered the sentence of the elders and heritors, and found the Irishman entitled to relief.

“By an application to the Supreme Court, therefore, it will be easy to get the better of any attempt on the part of the heritors and elders to keep Seceders from getting on the roll of the poor. It will be more difficult, however, to prevent them from making a difference in the sums given to the poor of the Establishment and Seceders, as a great deal in this respect must be left to the discretion of the heritors and elders. Should they, however, show a gross partiality in this respect, I think the Supreme Court would even here grant redress.”

A strong sensation was excited among the friends of missions, throughout the British Empire, by intelligence which reached this country early in 1824, that Mr. John Smith, one of the London Society's missionaries in Demerara, had been tried and condemned by a court-martial for exciting a spirit of rebellion among the slaves in that colony, and for aiding in the insurrection after it had broken out. Though the evidence adduced on Mr. Smith's trial (which was afterwards published), sufficiently established, in the estimation of all unprejudiced persons, his innocence of the crimes laid to his charge, and though the very verdict which was returned, while it declared that he had promoted discontent in the minds of the negroes, and had held communication with one of the insurgents, acquitted him of any intention to excite revolt, yet his judges sentenced him to be hanged, but recommended him to mercy. The sentence of death was remitted by the government at home; and directions were sent out that Mr. Smith should be dismissed from the colony, and should enter into recognizance not to reside within any settlement belonging to his Majesty in the West Indies. The Directors of the London Missionary society took up the matter with promptitude. After an examination of the evidence on which sentence had been pronounced against Mr. Smith, they passed resolutions declaring their conviction, that their missionary was not guilty of any of the charges alleged, and that the insurrection was not either directly or indirectly promoted by him. They further declared, that they could not withdraw their confidence and esteem from Mr. Smith, whose innocence they saw no cause to impugn; and they gave instructions to tender immediately an appeal (should it be deemed advisable by Mr. Smith's counsel) against the sentence of the court-martial, with a view to have the subject investigated before the Lords of his Majesty's Privy Council in England. In the mean time, Mr. Smith died in the colonial jail, broken

down under the effects of the harsh treatment which he had received. He was generally believed to have fallen a victim to the hostility which the leading men in the colony cherished against the missionary cause. The proceedings which had been carried on against him, and which terminated so tragically, were regarded as having originated in a spirit of persecution, and as designed to remove out of the way one who had shown himself a decided friend of the slaves. "The finger of truth," said the Directors of the London Society, "guided by the unanimous voice of the Christian church, will inscribe on its records the name of JOHN SMITH, as one of its martyrs, in the cause of spreading the gospel of their common Lord among the enslaved sons of Africa."

There was a loud cry raised by the friends of missions, among all denominations of Christians in this country, for investigation to be made into the circumstances of this melancholy case. The success of missions in the British colonies was deeply involved in the matter. The personal safety of the missionaries was at stake; and it was necessary that a united and indignant testimony should be lifted up against the iniquitous proceedings at Demerara, to deter others from acting a similar tragedy. The United Associate synod, sensitively alive to every public proceeding calculated to affect the interests of the Redeemer's kingdom at home or abroad, let their voice be heard amid the general shout of indignation. At their first meeting after the above transactions were made public, a resolution was proposed expressive of the opinion which the synod entertained of these extraordinary proceedings. This resolution, which was unanimously adopted, was to the following effect:—"In reviewing the present state of missionary operations in various parts of the world, the synod agree to express and to record their sincere sympathy with the London Missionary society, under the injuries which they have sustained in the late extraordinary proceedings at Demerara against their unoffending missionary, Mr. Smith; and, at the same time, to avow their full persuasion that an investigation of the whole affair is loudly called for, in justice to the memory of the deceased, as well as for protecting other missionary agents from similar injurious treatment, in every quarter of the British dominions."

The business concerning the appointment of a second Professor was not determined till the month of April 1825. It had been repeatedly discussed in committees, in presbyteries, and in the synod. Some members were of opinion that two professors were indispensable, both for the sake of the students, and also for the sake of cementing more firmly the union; others thought that the business of theological tuition

would be better conducted, by having only one Professor. A printed report on this subject had been in the hands of members since the month of September 1823. The committee who had prepared this report, had given their opinion in favour of the appointment of a second Professor. When the synod entered on the consideration of this question, at the period above-mentioned, a long discussion ensued, which terminated in the court declaring it as their opinion, "that the appointment of a second Professor is expedient for promoting the improvement of the system of theological tuition." On deliberating what department should be assigned to the additional Professor, they resolved, "that the business of the new Professor shall be to give a course of lectures on the history, evidence, and interpretation of the sacred books; to direct the reading of the students; and to examine them on these subjects; to read to them portions of the scriptures in the original critically; and to require from them explicatory and critical exercises." Having made these arrangements, they delayed electing the new Professor till they should meet in autumn. On the 15th of September, Dr. John Mitchell, one of the ministers of Glasgow, was elected Professor of Biblical Literature to the United Associate synod; and that respected individual still continues to discharge the duties connected with the important situation which he was then called upon to occupy.\*

A communication was laid before the synod, at their meeting in spring 1825, from the Rev. Cæsar Malan of Geneva, which was received by them with much satisfaction. In this communication, he stated his adherence to the doctrines contained in the Shorter Catechism, as the exhibition of his faith; and expressed the disappointment which he felt, in being prevented by urgent duty from being present at this meeting of the synod, and enjoying with them the fellowship of love in Christ. The expulsion of Mr. Malan from his church, in the city of Geneva, and the persecution to which he had otherwise been subjected, on account of his faithful ministrations of the gospel, had excited a lively interest in him, among the friends of religion in this country: And those ministers of the Secession who were acquainted with his history, were ready to hold out to him the right-hand of fellowship, and to hail him as a fellow-labourer in the vineyard of their com-

\* The course of theological study prescribed to the candidates for the ministry, at this period, was the following:—They were required to attend the prelections of the Professor of Biblical Literature the first two years, and the prelections of the Professor of Systematic Theology (Dr. Dick) the last three years of their curriculum. Each session of the Divinity Hall extended to eight weeks, and every student was required to be present at least six weeks of the session, otherwise it did not count as one of the prescribed course.

mon Master. In reply to this communication, the synod agreed to send him a letter, expressing the Christian affection which they felt for him, and declaring their hope that they would see him amongst them, at some future period, and receive him as a brother in the Lord. At their meeting in autumn, the same year, they resumed the consideration of this subject. They learned that their letter had not reached Mr. Malan, and that he could not be present with them on this occasion. But proceeding on the personal knowledge which several of their members possessed of Mr. Malan, and having otherwise obtained good information of his soundness in the faith, and of his holding the presbyterian form of church-government, they agreed, "on account of his being a foreigner, and of his peculiar circumstances, without any farther delay, to receive him into ministerial and Christian communion; and they appointed that the deed of this court, recognising the Rev. Cæsar Malan, as a minister of this church, certified by the moderator and clerk, shall be forwarded to him without delay."

This deed of the synod was joyfully received, and gratefully acknowledged, by Mr. Malan. A letter was read from him at next meeting, which excited much interest. The synod agreed to testify anew their affection for him, and to express their gratitude to God for having formed a connection, and opened a channel of intercourse, which may strengthen his hands, and prove of advantage for promoting the interests of religion. They also appointed a committee to correspond with him; "and, in particular, to give him assurance that the synod will be happy if, in any form, they can be instrumental in promoting the revival of religion in that part of the world, to which the churches of the Reformation in general, and the British churches in particular, owe an immense debt of gratitude."

In some of Malan's writings, which appeared in this country soon after he was received into the communion of the synod, statements of doctrine were made, which it was alleged were inconsistent with the standards of the Secession Church. The synod considered it their duty to make inquiry into the truth of the allegation, and a committee was appointed to correspond with Mr. Malan, to state to him the complaints that had been made concerning these parts of his writings, and to obtain from him an explanation of the views which he held on those doctrinal points concerning which he had expressed himself in language that was regarded by some as objectionable. The answer which Mr. Malan returned to the committee's communication, breathed an excellent spirit, and afforded much satisfaction to the synod. He expressed the grateful

sense which he had of the synod's kindness, in appointing a committee to correspond with him on the subject which had given them anxiety ; and he assured them, "that, after the most careful reperusal of the standards of the Secession Church, his sentiments respecting the assurance and appropriation of faith, are in accordance with these standards." The committee were appointed to continue their correspondence with him, at his own request ; and also to furnish him with copies of the Testimony.

The draught of a new Testimony, which had been for some time in the hands of a committee, for the purpose of being revised and corrected, was laid upon the synod's table, in the month of September 1826. This document occupied the attention of the synod, during several sederunts, at two successive meetings ; and, on the 20th September, 1827, it was finally adopted. In adopting the Testimony, they agreed that it should be recommended to the attention of their people, as containing a defence and illustration of the principles of the Secession, but that an approbation of the various articles in it should not be considered as indispensable to holding communion with the Secession Church. The Secession terms of communion are to be found in the Confession of Faith, the Catechisms (Larger and Shorter), and Summary of Principles ; and it was declared that the Testimony should not be exalted to a place of equal authority with these documents. The following is the enactment of the synod upon this subject :—

"That, while they retain the Confession of Faith and Catechisms (as recognised in the Basis of Union), and the Summary of Principles, as their creed, or confession of faith, or terms of communion, and therefore do not elevate the Testimony to the place of authority which these standards occupy ; they, having deliberately reviewed it, do adopt and sanction it as a defence and illustration of the principles and design of the Secession, and do earnestly recommend it to the candid and diligent perusal of all under their charge.

"And, farther, the synod agreed that a reference shall be made to said Testimony, in the *Formula of Ordination*, and that the fifth question shall be expressed in the following terms :—'Do you consider, as still valid, those reasons of secession from the judicatories of the Established Church, which are stated in the Testimonies emitted by the Secession Church, namely, the sufferance of error, without adequate censure ; the infringement of the rights of the Christian people, in the choice and settlement of their ministers, under the law of patronage ; the neglect or relaxation of discipline ; the restraint of ministerial freedom in opposing mal-administration ; and the refusal of the prevailing party to be reclaimed ? Do you

approve of the principles and design of the Secession, for the more full illustration of which, the Testimony, as adopted by the United Associate synod in September 1827, has been emitted? And do you resolve, through grace, to prosecute the design of the Secession?"

From this deed of synod, agreeing to insert in the Formula a reference to the Testimony, three ministers dissented.

In the preceding pages of this work, the attention of the reader has been repeatedly directed to the exertions made by the Secession Church to send the gospel to Nova Scotia. The ministers that were sent, at various periods, to that province, by the two Secession synods, were eminently useful in promoting the religious improvement of the colonists. To their enlightened and persevering exertions, aided by the friends of literature and science, the Academical Institution at Pictou owed its existence. This institution was founded on a plan similar to that of the Scotch colleges, and was erected for the purpose of giving a liberal education to the children of dissenters, who were excluded from the only other academical institution in the province (the King's College at Windsor), by the Episcopalian tests that were there imposed. After the union took place in 1818, among the various denominations of Presbyterians in Nova Scotia, the United Presbyterian Church in that province resolved to prosecute a scheme of missionary labour, with a view to propagate the knowledge of the gospel in the surrounding districts. They wisely considered, that the best method of accomplishing this would be by training up preachers from their own congregations. For this purpose, they requested the Rev. Dr. M'Culloch, who was Principal of the Pictou College, to take under his charge, as Professor of Divinity, those young men who had completed their academical course at that institution, and whose views were directed to the office of the holy ministry. Complying with this request of his brethren, Dr. M'Culloch commenced a private theological class, which he taught gratuitously; and, in the course of a few years, several young men of talents and piety were licensed to preach the gospel, whose labours were of great service to the cause of religion in that quarter of the world.

The popular constitution of the seminary at Pictou, which rendered it a favourite with the mass of the population, excited against it the hostility of those who saw in it a formidable rival to the lordly Episcopalian institution at Windsor. A system of opposition was commenced against the Pictou Academy. Great efforts were made to mar its prosperity, if not to crush it altogether. In this opposition, the bishop of the province, and a faction who acted along with him, took a

decided part. From the commencement of the institution at Pictou, the sum of £400 was annually voted by the provincial legislature for its support. Repeated attempts were made by the friends of the institution to render this endowment permanent. Several times a bill, for this purpose, was brought forward in the House of Assembly, and was passed by large and respectable majorities; but it was uniformly rejected by the council (the upper house of the legislature, consisting of twelve persons), of which the bishop is a member; and, on one occasion, it was negatived by his casting vote. The influence of this hostile party was such, that they at last succeeded, not merely in rejecting the bill for a permanent endowment to the Pictou College, but also in throwing out the bill for the annual grant, although both of these had triumphantly passed the Assembly. The infant institution was thus left, for a season, to the unaided exertions of its friends.

Matters were fast hastening to this crisis, when Dr. M'Culloch paid a visit to this country in 1826, to excite an interest among the friends of religion on behalf of the struggling academical institution at Pictou. As a considerable proportion of the ministers composing the Presbyterian Church of Nova Scotia were of Secession origin; and, as the Pictou Academy was closely identified with the prosperity of that church, so Dr. M'Culloch, on arriving in this country, made application for assistance to the United Associate synod. Nor was his appeal to that body made in vain. The sympathy of both ministers and people was strongly excited in behalf of the Presbyterian Church of Nova Scotia, and of the Pictou Institution. At a meeting of the synod, held in the month of April 1826, they heard Dr. M'Culloch give an interesting statement of the difficulties which he and his brethren had to encounter, and of the opposition that was given to their infant college. After listening to his statement, the synod were unanimous in recording their opinion, "that the Presbyterian Church of Nova Scotia, and the Pictou Institution, have strong claims on the sympathy and liberality of the Presbyterian, and other churches in Britain, and of associations for religious purposes, and especially of the United Secession Church." They issued a recommendation to the congregations under their inspection, to make a collection, without delay, in aid of the funds of the Pictou Academical Institution; and they appointed a committee to prepare a short statement of the claims of the Institution, to be read from the pulpit of each congregation, when the collection was intimated, and also to consider what farther measures might be adopted "for promoting the interests of our sister-church in Nova Scotia."

This committee drew up and circulated among the congre-

gations an excellent address, in which, after stating the circumstances in which the Pictou Academy had been formed, and the difficulties it had to struggle with, they concluded with the following energetic appeal to the Secession:—"From the Secession Church in particular, the Pictou Academy is entitled to the kindest regards. It is the legitimate offspring of that gospel with which our fathers of the Secession and we have rejoiced the wilderness. When no other church cared for the presbyterians of those parts, we sent to them our brethren to share their hardships, and to cheer them with the consolations of mercy; and our brethren went not in vain. Amidst privation and toil they have persevered in their labours, till the seed which they have sown has produced, and still promises, an abundant harvest. In the face of an opposing episcopacy, they have not only planted the presbyterian church, containing above thirty ministers, but founded a seminary which gives it the prospect of enlargement and permanence. But the very success of our brethren has aroused opposition; and because they have proceeded from the Secession Church, their institution is an object of avowed hostility, excluded from patronage to which it is fairly entitled, and, in the midst of difficulty, now struggling for existence. Missionaries in other lands have been cherished by the resources of powerful societies; ours have themselves borne the burden and heat of the day, till the fruit of their toil presents the prospect of a rich harvest in Christ; and now, when opposed and thwarted, they have asked our sympathy, shall we say, You must struggle alone? Other societies protect their missionary institutions with a jealous care; and shall our missionaries be left to brood over the ruins of a fabric which they have so well and so faithfully reared? The Secession Church assigned to them the field of their labours: the work is not theirs, it is our work; and, as was the planting, the watering should be ours. In name of the synod of the United Church, therefore,—for the sake of our brethren abroad,—for the honour of the Secession at home,—and for the sake of Him who has honoured you to plant his church in the waste places of the wilderness,—we ask you to show to those whom you have sent to this work, that you feel for them in their difficulties, and care for them, and, after the example of the God of the church, will not forsake the work of your own hands."

When the synod met again in the month of September, they received from their committee a report of the measures which had been adopted, with the view of strengthening the hands of the brethren in Nova Scotia, and of giving support to their Academical Institution. These measures were approved of, and the synod showed the deep interest which they

took in this business, by entering on their record the following resolution :—" That the synod, being well assured of the destitute condition, as to the means of religious instruction, of many of our countrymen in the British colonies of North America, and being convinced that it is their duty to endeavour to supply these wants ; and of the superior advantages of having these wants supplied through the instrumentality of the church already planted, and by ministers educated in these colonies ; and farther, that having the fullest confidence in the integrity, wisdom, and zeal of their brethren of the Presbyterian Church of Nova Scotia ; and being impressed with the importance of the Academical Institution of Pictou, for securing a regular supply of ministers and teachers for these colonies, do earnestly recommend to the ministers and people under their care, to exert themselves in the establishment and maintenance of a society, or societies, for promoting the religious improvement of our North American colonies, by aiding the Pictou Academical Institution, and the missionary exertions of the Presbyterian Church of Nova Scotia ; and, at the same time, the synod agreed to renew the recommendation to those congregations, which have not yet found it convenient to make the collection in aid of the Pictou Academical Institution ; and farther to state, that assistance promptly afforded will be more efficient than at a more distant period, and will operate more powerfully to the encouragement of the Presbyterian Church of Nova Scotia, whose exertions to extend the knowledge of the gospel in those parts of the world, are worthy of the warmest approbation, and give them strong claims to the sympathy and co-operation of British Christians in general, and especially of their brethren of the Secession Church."

The exertions that were thus made to excite an interest in favour of the Presbyterian Church of Nova Scotia and the Pictou Academy, were not in vain. Soon after the above recommendation was given, a society was formed in Glasgow, consisting of ministers and laymen, belonging not merely to the Secession, but to various dissenting communities, having for its object the raising of funds for the support of the Presbyterian Church and Academical Institution of Nova Scotia. Collections were made for the same benevolent purpose, by several of the Secession congregations. The students attending the Theological Seminary of the United Secession Church, under the Rev. Drs. Dick and Mitchell, generously pledged themselves at one of their meetings to raise, during the months of the intervening vacation, the sum of one hundred pounds in aid of the same cause : And before the return of another session of the Hall, they had not only redeemed their pledge,

but doubled it, by raising *two* instead of one hundred pounds. The result of these united efforts was, that during the years 1828—29, the liberal sum of £481 was remitted to the brethren in Nova Scotia for the support of their religious and literary institutions.

This seasonable supply was received with gratitude; and the trustees of the Pictou Academy sent a letter to the United synod, expressing their thanks for the friendly exertions which the synod had made in behalf of their institution. The opposition to it, however, still continued; and it was resolved, by the brethren in Nova Scotia, to lay before his Majesty's government a representation of the grievances under which they laboured. Joseph Blanchard, Esq., a member of the colonial legislature, was sent over by them to this country, for the purpose now mentioned. He was introduced to the synod, at their meeting in April 1831; and being permitted to address the court, he returned thanks, in the name of his constituents, for the pecuniary aid which had been received from the Secession Church, and from other friends in this country,—“without which (he said) the Pictou Institution could not have continued to impart to the inhabitants of that province the benefit of a liberal education.” He further craved the countenance and support of the Secession Church, in the application which he was about to make to his Majesty's government. The synod entered with zeal into the business which had brought Mr. Blanchard to this country. They resolved to second his efforts, by presenting an address to the king, in behalf of the Presbyterian Church and Academy of Nova Scotia. An address was accordingly prepared by a committee, subscribed by the moderator and clerk of the synod, and delivered to Mr. Blanchard, that he might get it presented in due form. The committee, by whom the address was prepared, were also appointed “to correspond with, and to interest in behalf of Mr. Blanchard's constituents, friends in London, who may give him countenance and co-operation in his application to government.”

Soon after this the charter of the Pictou Academy was remodelled. A sum of £400 annually, for the support of the Institution, was granted for a period of ten years, and some new arrangements were made with regard to the course of education to be pursued in the Academy. In a letter written by one of the ministers of Nova Scotia (dated 8th May, 1832,) we find the following reference to these arrangements:—“The controversy occasioned by the Pictou Academy, and that has so long and so furiously raged in this part of the province, is at length at an end, at least for ten years, and all parties are, or at least ought to be, satisfied. His Majesty's council have

granted the Institution £400 annually for ten years. Dr. M'Culloch is to have £250, and £100 to go for teaching the lower branches, to please the Kirk party. The Doctor's son will receive the remaining £50, and as much more as the Trustees think meet. The council have also granted £400 to enable the Trustees to set the system a-going. Probably a house for the lower branches will have to be built. Seven of the old Trustees are to remain in office, and four new ones are to be chosen by the governor to represent the Kirk party. The new system must be in operation by the 1st of July.\*

The new arrangements did not give satisfaction to all the parties concerned. Some of the friends of the Academy became disheartened, and ceased to make exertions for its support. The United synod in Scotland, having learned that the affairs of the Institution were in a drooping condition, and that there was some danger lest the college might be closed for the higher branches of education, or pass into the hands of those who were hostile to the interests of the presbyterian church, wrote a letter to the brethren of Nova Scotia, urging upon them the importance of maintaining the Institution in a state of efficiency. From the reply which was returned to this letter, and which is dated 29th June, 1837, the following extract is given. The account which it contains of the prospects of the Pictou Academical Institution is by no means flattering:—"The situation of the Pictou Academy, from which source alone we can expect young men to emanate, prepared by a liberal education to enter upon the study of divinity, we are sorry to say is far from being such as its friends could wish. A variety of circumstances have concurred to bring this seminary to its present condition. With the proceedings of the provincial legislature towards it, we presume you are already acquainted. Of its contendings with the clergymen in connexion with the Established Church of Scotland, we know you are not ignorant. Of the full extent of the injury which it has sustained by the remodelling of its charter, some of you perhaps are not so fully aware. By this change, its deadliest enemies have been admitted to a participation in the trust; and, as might have been expected, have exerted their influence to ruin the Institution. Already one hundred of the four hundred pounds of the provincial endowment has been applied to the teaching of those elementary branches, which are taught in almost every grammar-school in the province, and in one within a few roods of the Academy. By this appropriation of its funds, the original system of education pursued in this Institution has been essentially

\* Letter from the Rev. David Roy, in the Theological Magazine for 1832.

impaired. From inadequacy of funds, the second teacher was, for a time, compelled to abandon his situation; and for the same reason, natural philosophy no longer constitutes part of the Academic course. The influence of the hostile trustees in the Board has, no doubt, to a considerable extent, damped the ardour of some of its friends. Besides, for several years, the expectations of our husbandmen have been disappointed by extensive failures of the crops; and during the past year many of our people have been, and still are, straitened to procure the means of immediate subsistence. In such circumstances great liberality is not to be expected. But we dare not conceal the fact, that many of our members manifest towards the Institution a coldness which could not have been anticipated. When we reflect upon the small sum which it would require from each individual in our connexion, to place this seminary beyond the reach of its most inveterate foes; and when we think of its vast importance to our church, we cannot refrain from mourning over their want of liberality. It affords us much pleasure, however, to add, that though this disposition is too prevalent, it is by no means universal. There are amongst us not a few whose zeal neither the frowns of the legislature, nor the influence of enemies in the board of trustees, nor the severity of the times, nor the apathy of brethren can damp, and who are still willing to make great exertions in its behalf.”\*

Such is the account given, by the brethren in Nova Scotia, of the unfavourable circumstances in which the Pictou Academy is at present placed. It will be a source of much regret to its friends in Scotland, if an institution so well fitted to promote the cause both of religion and literature in that distant region, shall be permitted to languish for want of adequate support.

On the 25th of January, 1833, the Rev. Dr. Dick, of Glasgow, one of the Theological Professors of the United Associate synod, was unexpectedly removed by death. He died in the 69th year of his age, and the 47th of his ministry. For a period of nearly thirteen years, he occupied the professorial chair; and the arduous duties connected with that important situation, he discharged with great ability and success. As a scholar, a divine, and a gentleman, he occupied a high place. He possessed a clear discriminating understanding, a finely-polished taste, a richly cultivated mind, and a most extensive, as well as profound, acquaintance with the various departments of theological literature. His “*Essay on the Inspiration of the Scriptures*,” procured for him, at an early period

\* Letter from the Presbyterian Church of Nova Scotia to the United Associate synod.

of his ministry, a high reputation as a theological writer. This production has long been regarded as a standard work in divinity. For chaste simplicity of style, elegance of diction, lucid arrangement, and conclusive reasoning, it will bear a comparison with the most admired productions of either ancient or modern times. His "Lectures on Theology," which have been published since his death, have placed, on a solid and lasting basis, the fame of Dr. Dick. These lectures show the extent, the variety, and solidity of his learning. They constitute, if not the best, at least one of the very best, systems of divinity extant in the English language. It is certainly a cause of gratitude to the Secession Church, that, from the commencement of her history, her theological chair should have been occupied by a succession of men who have been distinguished for their extensive knowledge of the Scriptures, their high attainments in theology, and their general acquaintance with the various branches of literature.

When the death of Dr. Dick was announced to the United synod, at their meeting in April, they entered on their record the following tribute of respect to his memory:—"In recording the decease of the Rev. Dr. Dick, the synod reckon it due to his character, and his valuable services, to express, in their minutes, the high esteem in which he is held as a man, as a Christian, as a minister of the gospel, and as Professor of Theology, under the United Associate synod,—an office, the duties of which, during the term of thirteen years, he discharged with exemplary diligence and fidelity, and with advantage to the churches of the Secession; and the gratitude which is due to him for the benefit which, by his instrumentality the exalted Saviour has conferred, and continues to confer on them, in his having trained so large a proportion of their ministers for the service of God, in the gospel of his Son, and their desire to profit by his sudden and unexpected removal to the better country, as an excitement to follow his example in fulfilling the ministry which they have received of the Lord Jesus; and to hold themselves in readiness for that change, by which, without any previous warning, their labour may be terminated."

The synod, instead of immediately choosing a professor, to supply the place of Dr. Dick, appointed a committee to consider "whether any or what improvements might be made in the present system of theological tuition;" and the students who had completed their two years' attendance in Dr. Mitchell's class, were placed under the superintendence of the several presbyteries, who were required to assign them discourses, and to direct their studies, until another Professor should be chosen.

At a subsequent meeting, the committee on theological tuition presented a long report, in which it was recommended, that the course of study should be greatly enlarged, and that, for the future, there should be four, instead of two, Professors connected with the Theological Seminary. The report of the committee occasioned much discussion in the synod, and a considerable diversity of opinion; but, after being discussed at several meetings, it was finally adopted by a large majority. The following paragraph, extracted from it, contains an outline of the enlarged plan of study:—

“ Students, in addition to the course formerly prescribed, viz. instructions respecting the history, evidence, and interpretation of the Holy Scriptures, and in systematic theology, shall have critically expounded to them, during their course of study, one or more of the principal books of the Old Testament, the gospel history, the Acts of the Apostles, one or more of the doctrinal epistles, and the pastoral epistles to Timothy and Titus; that they shall not only be instructed in systematic theology, but have a detailed view given them of the divine dispensations, as these are developed in the Holy Scriptures, on a plan similar to that of President Edwards’ History of Redemption; that the qualifications of the ministerial character, and the duties of the pastoral office, shall be fully explained to them; that they shall be instructed in all the services which, as teachers or rulers in the Christian church, they may be called on to perform, such as conducting the public devotions of the church, the composition and delivery of pulpit discourses, both lectures and sermons, ministerial visitation of families, public catechising, visitation of the sick, the government and discipline of the church, as administered in sessions, presbyteries, and synods; that they shall be instructed in ecclesiastical history in general, and especially in the history of the primitive church, and the history of the church in Britain, particularly the history of the Secession Church; and, finally, that they shall be made intimately acquainted with the Confession of Faith, and the Testimony of the United Secession Church.”

This extended course was placed under the superintendence of four Professors, having the following designations:—1. A Professor of Biblical Literature. 2. A Professor of Exegetical Theology, or exposition of the Holy Scriptures. 3. A Professor of Systematic Theology. 4. A Professor of Pastoral Theology and Ecclesiastical History.

In addition to Dr. Mitchell, who already filled the chair of Biblical Literature, three new Professors were elected by the synod, on the 13th of April, 1834. The persons who were elevated by the suffrages of their brethren, to this distinguish-

ed situation, were,—Dr. John Brown, one of the ministers of Edinburgh, appointed Professor of Exegetical Theology ; the Rev. Alexander Duncan, of Mid-Calder, elected Professor of Systematic Theology ; and the Rev. Robert Balmer, of Berwick, who was appointed to fill the chair of Pastoral Theology. But, by a subsequent arrangement, sanctioned by the synod, Messrs. Duncan and Balmer exchanged Professorships. A small salary of £50 annually, was annexed to each of these appointments. This salary was not intended as a remuneration to the Professors for the time and labour spent by them in discharging the duties of their office, but was designed merely to defray necessary expenses. All the individuals who hold the office of Professor, in connexion with the United Associate synod, may be considered as performing the arduous labours of it gratuitously, seeing that the small sum allowed for incidental expenses will be barely sufficient for the purpose. As the Divinity Hall meets every alternate year in Edinburgh and Glasgow, three of the Professors have always to leave their homes, and take up their abode in one or other of these towns, at least two months of the year, during the session of the Hall.

The curriculum of study prescribed to the students by the new arrangements, is five sessions, of eight weeks each, during the months of August and September; and it is rendered imperative on every student to attend the whole time. Should any one leave the Hall before the term of eight weeks is completed, it is not counted to him for a session, unless a satisfactory reason shall be given to the synod, for a particular exception being made in his case. During the first two sessions of the course, the students attend the prelections of the Professors of Biblical and Exegetical Theology ; and, during the other three, they are under the superintendence of the Professors of Systematic and Pastoral Theology. During the long vacations which occur betwixt one session of the Hall and another, the students are under the inspection of the presbyteries within whose bounds they reside, who require them to deliver at least one discourse, at a meeting of presbytery, during the course of the year, who prescribe to them subjects connected with church history and divinity, on which they are carefully examined, and who keep strict watch over their general conduct.

Before any student can be admitted to the study of divinity, in connexion with the United Associate synod, he must be a member in full communion with the Secession Church. He must produce evidence to the presbytery, that he has attended one of the Scotch universities for a period of at least three years, and must submit to an examination on the Latin,

Greek, and Hebrew languages; also concerning his knowledge of logic, moral philosophy, and natural philosophy. With regard to the last-mentioned department (natural philosophy), there is an option given to the student to attend this class, either before he is admitted to the study of divinity, or immediately after his first session at the Hall. But, exclusive of his attendance upon the natural philosophy class, he must have attended, during the course of three sessions, at one of the universities. It is further required of him, that he satisfy the presbytery with regard to the purity of his motives in seeking to enter upon the work of the ministry; and he is subjected to an examination on the subject of personal religion.

The statement now given concerning the course of study prescribed by the United Secession Church to those who are aspiring to the office of the holy ministry, and concerning the strict attention paid by the ecclesiastical courts to the students at every period of their course, shows that, in so far as the object can be accomplished by means of human regulations, the Secession congregations have every reasonable ground to believe, that their spiritual interests will not be neglected, by being confided to the hands of men who are either incompetent for their work, or unworthy of their office. I know not any better security that can be given, than that which is afforded by the above enactments, for training up, under the blessing of Heaven, a learned, a pious, and an efficient gospel ministry.

At the meeting of the United synod, in the month of September 1833, a communication was read from the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America. This letter (dated Philadelphia, June 15, 1833) was heard with deep attention. It contained a most gratifying account of the rapid progress and flourishing condition of the Presbyterian Church in America. The following extract from it shows the expansive power which Christianity possesses; and how, from a small beginning in any country, it will gradually diffuse itself amid many obstacles, until the whole land shall be gladdened with its influence. The statements contained in this extract are highly encouraging to those who are engaged in missionary labours either at home or abroad. Let them not despair though the beginning may be small:—  
“Less than three centuries since, the goodly land which has become our inheritance, was emphatically a dark and howling wilderness, which no glad tidings of salvation had ever reached, no ray from the Sun of righteousness had ever penetrated. Now, it is planted, to a large extent, with Christian churches, in the most of which, however differing in name, the essential truths of divine revelation are taught and inculcated, and num-

erous hopeful converts are added unto the Lord. The church to which we belong, traces its formal organization to an association of not more than six ministers of the gospel, emigrants, with one exception only, from Scotland and Ireland, who, in the beginning of the last century (A. D. 1704), formed a presbytery, and held their first meeting for business in the city of Philadelphia. This church now embraces in its bosom ministers and members, whose locations are scattered over a region of country, extending from Canada on the north, to the Gulf of Mexico on the south; and from the Atlantic on the east, to the Missouri on the west. It numbers twenty-two synods, one hundred and eleven presbyteries, more than eighteen hundred ministers, twenty-five hundred churches, and more than two hundred and thirty-three thousand communicants. Thus our original presbytery has resembled the humble, but pure spring, from which some of our beautiful rivers take their rise, whose waters, penurious at first, run rapidly forward, and constantly increasing and widening, and deepening as they flow, refresh and fertilize every region through which they pass. Our first presbytery has, indeed, in its wonderful increase and extension, gladdened many a solitary place, and made the desert rejoice and blossom as the rose."

One of the objects which the General Assembly of America had in view, in sending this letter to the United Associate synod, was to request, that the synod would co-operate with the Assembly, and with other religious communities, in setting apart the first Monday of January, in the ensuing year, as a season of special prayer and fasting, for the conversion of the world to Christ. The synod entered most cordially into the views of their American brethren, in reference to this matter; and they gave a recommendation to all the congregations under their inspection, to set apart a portion of the first Monday of January for this purpose; "that on the same day the churches of the Secession in Britain may unite with the churches in America, and in other parts of the world, in supplications to the God of all grace, that the Spirit may be poured out abundantly, and that the word of the Lord may have free course and be glorified."

At one of the sederunts of this meeting of synod, the Rev. Dr. Cox from New York, a member of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in America, was introduced to the court. The synod gave him an affectionate welcome, and invited him to correspond. The Doctor made some interesting statements to the synod, concerning the progress of religion in the States of America, and especially in the churches under the inspection of the General Assembly. The synod, through the medium of their moderator, expressed to

Dr. Cox their gratitude for the communications that had been made to them, the interest which they felt in the prosperity of the religious community with which he was connected, and their sincere respect and affection for himself; after which some time was most pleasantly spent in prayer and praise. Dr. Peddie commenced these exercises by offering up supplication. He was succeeded by Dr. Cox; and then the whole audience united in singing the 133d Psalm. A committee was appointed to prepare an answer to the letter which had been received from the General Assembly of America.

Another communication, which was received at this meeting, and which afforded great pleasure to the brethren, was a letter from the Congregational Union of England and Wales. It was addressed to the moderator of the United Associate synod, and was to the following effect:—

“CONGREGATIONAL LIBRARY, *London, 4th June, 1833.*

“REV. AND DEAR SIR,—Annexed we beg leave to transmit to you, as moderator of the United Associate synod, the seventh resolution of the last general meeting of the Congregational Union of England and Wales, held here on the 10th of May, 1833.

“We take this opportunity of assuring you, dear Sir, and, through you, our beloved brethren of your communion, both in England and Scotland, that this overture proceeds from the most cordial wish to become more closely and more ostensibly united with you in Christian bonds. The points of dissimilarity between our bodies are, we trust, so few and unimportant, in comparison of the great terms of our agreement, that the proposed intercourse may be carried on, not only without any inconvenience, but with mutual comfort and advantage.

“The minutes of our general meeting now sent, will inform you of our correspondence with our brethren of your order in the United States of America, and of the proposal for the interchange of delegates, from both sides of the Atlantic, in the ensuing spring. We persuade ourselves that this intelligence will be agreeable to yourself and your brethren in the ministry, with your whole body; and we hope that we shall enjoy a similar gratification at our next general meeting, in receiving a delegation from the United Associate synod.

“If this proposal meet with acceptance, the committee of the Union would immediately nominate brethren with a view to the pleasing office of delegates to your next General Assembly.

“We are delighted with the tokens of increasing unanimity and affection among the ministers and churches of Christ, of approximating denominations, and hail them as a gracious omen of the approaching period, when ‘the watchmen on the walls of Zion shall see eye to eye,’ and the church of Christ, at large, be more entirely united in judgment and affection.

“Requesting that you will have the kindness to make known this communication, in your official capacity, to your body, with respectful and affectionate and good wishes, and with fervent prayer for your peace and prosperity, we are, Rev. and dear Sir, your faithful friends and fellow-servants in the gospel of Christ,

“JOSEPH TURNBULL,  
“WILLIAM STERN PALMER, } *Secretaries.*  
“JOSHUA WILSON,

The following is the “seventh resolution” referred to in the above letter:—

“Moved by the Rev. John Burnet, second by Samuel Newell, Esq. and resolved unanimously, That, as the Union is bound to fraternise with all denominations of Christians, holding the faith of Christ in purity, and also avowing their belief in the unlawfulness of using the secular power in the kingdom of Christ; and as the third object of the Union is, ‘to establish fraternal correspondence with other bodies of Christians throughout the world,’ it is with much pleasure that the meeting is led to hope, that a communication may be formed with the United Associate synod of Scotland; and that the Secretaries be requested to address a letter to the moderator of the synod, proposing that an exchange of delegates take place at our annual meetings; for the purpose of promoting Christian fellowship, and for advancing the interests of the kingdom of our Lord.”

In the proposal made by the Congregational Union, the synod most cordially acquiesced. An answer, subscribed by the moderator and clerk of the synod, was immediately returned to the above communication, in which the writers say:—“We are authorized by the synod of the United Secession Church to acknowledge the receipt of your friendly communication, and to state in reply, that the synod enters cordially into the proposal of opening a correspondence with the Congregational Union of England and Wales, and will have much pleasure in receiving your deputation, and in sending deputies in return.”

After giving some account of the Secession, and pointing out the advantages of union among Christians, the synod's answer concluded in the following terms:—“We cherish the hope that a better day has begun to dawn upon the Christian world, and hail as one of the signs of this auspicious period, that tendency to approximate to one another, and to solicit an interchange of Christian and friendly offices, which is at present manifested by various denominations. Truth is not less ardently loved, and not less clearly taught and maintained now than formerly; but a more correct estimate is formed of the relative importance of the various doctrines and ordinances of the gospel, and of that degree of uniformity in doctrine and order which is necessary to Christian fellowship. United in sentiment as the Church of the Secession, and the Congregational Churches of England and Wales are, in regard to the fundamental doctrines of Christianity, namely, the universal and total depravity of human nature,—the divinity and atonement of the Son of God,—justification by faith,—the necessity of sanctification by the Spirit,—the certainty of a future judgment and of an everlasting state of retribution, we hold it to be not simply allowable, but an imperative duty to recognise

this unanimity, and to hold it forth to public attention. By this means prejudices may be removed, brotherly love may be strengthened, and the leading principles of our holy faith drawn forth from those multiplied details by which they have been obscured rather than illustrated,—entombed rather than defended; and inscribed, as it were, upon the banner of the cross, may be spread abroad to collect together all the genuine followers of the Redeemer. Differing as the churches of the Secession and the Congregational churches do, respecting some points of order, it is neither expected nor desired that there should be concealment or compromise on either side; but they desire to obey the apostolic injunction, in the hope that they will experience the fulfilment of the promise connected with it:—‘If in any thing ye be variously minded, God will reveal even this unto you: nevertheless, whereto we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us mind the same things.’”

In accordance with the resolution quoted above, the Rev. John Burnet of Camberwell, London, was sent as a delegate by the Congregational Union of England and Wales to the United Associate synod, and was introduced to them at their meeting in April 1834. Mr. Burnet addressed the synod in a speech distinguished for its piety and good sense. A suitable reply was made by the moderator. Several members of court expressed their high satisfaction that a correspondence had been commenced in such auspicious circumstances, between the United Secession Church and the Congregational Union of England. Some time was then spent in praise and prayer. Appropriate Psalms were sung; and the Rev. John Jamieson of Scoon, and Mr. Burnet, offered up devout supplication to God. Mr. Burnet was requested by the synod to favour the court with his presence, during their sittings at this meeting, to as great an extent as his time would permit, and to aid them with his counsel. The synod appointed Drs. Mitchell and Heugh of Glasgow, and Mr. Andrew Marshall, minister at Kirkintilloch, a deputation to attend the meeting of the Congregational Union, which was to be held in London, the following month. At the first meeting of synod, held after the return of this deputation, Dr. Heugh reported that Dr. Mitchell and he had fulfilled the appointment of synod, and had been received by their brethren of the Congregational Union in a respectful and affectionate manner. The synod returned thanks to these brethren, “for the manner in which they had fulfilled the trust committed to them;” and they recorded anew their desire to cultivate a friendly intercourse with such a large and respectable body of Christians as the Congregationalists of England.

Measures of an important kind, affecting the interests of education in this country, were brought before parliament during the session of 1835; and in an especial manner bills were introduced by the Lord Advocate, having for their object the improvement of some of the Scottish universities. The attention of the synod being called to this subject, at their meeting in October 1835, they expressed their satisfaction with the measures that had been introduced, and recorded their gratitude to the public-spirited men by whom these measures had been originated and supported. They further appointed a committee "to watch the progress of the measures referred to,—to correspond with the members of parliament who have introduced the bills above mentioned, and with those who supported measures for rendering more liberal the system of education; and, particularly, to use means, that, by the removal of all sectarian tests, by which admission, whether as teachers or pupils, into our great schools of education is fettered, the full advantages of these national institutions may be secured to members of our church in common with our fellow-citizens."

These bills, with which the synod thus expressed their satisfaction, were soon after this withdrawn, that Government might bring in a general measure for the improvement of all the Scottish universities, founded on the report of a commission which had been appointed during the reign of his Majesty George IV. Connected with this bill, when first introduced, there was nothing calculated to alarm the fears of dissenters. But through the interference of the church courts connected with the Establishment, a proposal was made to introduce into it several objectionable clauses, especially one for the purpose "of preserving to the Established Church of Scotland all the rights, privileges, control, and superintendence, which any of its courts now exercise, or can lawfully claim to exercise, over the universities."

The synod's committee met and drew up a series of resolutions strongly condemnatory of the proposed measure. These resolutions were extensively circulated; and when the synod met in October 1836, they warmly approved of what their committee had done, and returned them thanks "for the diligence, zeal, and ability" with which they had fulfilled their appointment. The following are the resolutions which the committee adopted. The reader will perceive from them the obnoxious nature of the measure, which was defeated chiefly through the decided opposition made to it by the United Associate synod.

"Edinburgh, 21st July, 1836.—At a meeting of the committee, appointed at the fourth sederunt of the United Associate synod, 7th October, 1835, the

Rev. John Brown, D. D., in the Chair, and the Rev. Adam Thomson, A. M., Clerk, the following Resolutions were proposed, and, after due consideration, unanimously adopted, viz. :—

I. That the synod were much gratified on hearing of the Bills, which it was originally contemplated by the LORD ADVOCATE, and others, to introduce into the House of Commons "for the improvement of *some* of the Universities of the Country," as is evident from the following Minute appointing this Committee:—"The synod, understanding that important measures for the improvement of general education have been adopted by the legislature, and that Bills for the improvement of some of the Universities of this country have been introduced into the House of Commons during the last Session of Parliament, consider themselves called on to express their satisfaction with these measures, their sense of the gratitude which is due to the public-spirited men who have originated and supported them, and their approbation of the general principle of these measures, as equitable and liberal, as well as many of their details; and strongly impressed with the conviction that their most important interests, as connected with the education of their ministers and people, are deeply involved in the state of general education in the country, agreed to appoint a Committee to watch the progress of the measures referred to—to correspond with the Members of Parliament who have introduced the Bills above-mentioned, and with those who have supported measures for rendering more liberal the system of education; and particularly to use means that, by the removal of all *sectarian tests*, by which admission, whether as teachers or pupils, into our great schools of education is fettered, the full advantages of these national institutions may be secured to members of our Church, in common with our fellow-citizens."

II. That this Committee have learned with deep regret that these Bills have been relinquished, in order that Government might bring in a general measure for the improvement of all the Scottish Universities, founded on the Report of a Commission appointed by his late Majesty George IV. in July, 1826—and which, as might have been expected, partook of many of the prejudices for principles of monopoly and ancient usages, by which some of the Commissioners had long been pre-eminently distinguished.

III. That although the Bill was originally founded on this Report, there was little in it to alarm the fears or to affect the interests of Dissenters, till, through the officious interference of the Church Courts of the Establishment in Scotland—who seemed to have no object in view so much as to annoy his Majesty's Government, even when carrying into effect the plans of their own old and tried friends—alterations were proposed of a kind which, however accordant with the exclusive principles which prevailed in the age when the constitutions of the Universities were framed, are utterly repugnant to the more enlarged views of those who, enjoying the light, have imbibed the liberality, of the nineteenth century.

IV. That the Earl of Aberdeen, one of the Royal Commissioners referred to, had, in order to allay the fears, to gratify the bigotry, and to maintain the pretensions of the Established Church, pledged himself to the introduction of several objectionable additions to the present Bill—but especially of one most obnoxious clause—"for the purpose," as his Lordship expresses it, "of preserving to the Established Church of Scotland all the rights, privileges, control, and superintendence, which any of its courts now exercise, or can lawfully claim to exercise, over the Universities."

V. That "the rights, privileges, control, and superintendence" which the Courts of the Established Church "now exercise," are, in consequence of the advanced state of society, to a considerable extent, nominal;—but that were these laws, which have for some time been, in a great measure, a dead letter, to be revived, by the proposed clause being enacted by Parliament, they could lawfully, and would be emboldened immediately to exercise alleged "rights, privileges, superintendence, and control," of a kind dangerous to the liberties, and most injurious to the literature of the nation—as is clear from the laws referred to, and required to be enforced by the Act of the General Assembly, February 7, 1645;—and also by the Act of Assembly 1719, of which the following is an extract:—" 'Tis recommended to the several Presbyteries, in

whose bounds Colleges or Universities are, to take particular care, that all the Masters thereof do acknowledge, profess, and subscribe, in manner appointed by the 6th Act of the Parliament 1707, intituled an *Act for securing the Protestant Religion, and Presbyterian Church Government*; and to take special notice of what is taught therein contrair to, or inconsistent with the *Confession of Faith of this Church*, or the Worship, Discipline, or Government of the same,—and to observe the morals and conversation both of Masters and Scholars," &c.

VI. That, as is evident from this, the effect of adopting Lord Aberdeen's proposed amendments would be, that none could henceforth, how well soever otherwise qualified by pre-eminent talents, literary acquirements, and moral character, be eligible as professors in any of our Universities, if they could not subscribe to all the principles of the Confession of Faith, however intolerant some of them may be, unless their consciences would either allow them to subscribe anything, or to act the part of a distinguished individual, who said that "he could subscribe to the Church Confession of Faith, as containing the confession of his faith, *and a great deal more*."—Nay, and by the introduction of the proposed clause, several eminent Professors in different Colleges at present, who are Dissenters, would forthwith be displaced; as, in the 17th Act of William and Mary, it is "ordained that no Professors, Principals, Regents, Masters, or others, bearing office, in any university, college, or school, within the kingdom, be either admitted, or *allowed to continue* in the exercise of their said functions, but such as do acknowledge, profess, and shall subscribe to the Confession of Faith."

VII. That with respect to the proposed Royal Visitors of the Universities, it is feared that they, like the Professors, may be obliged to swear allegiance to the CHURCH, and that to the obvious infringement of the natural, civil, and sacred rights of Dissenters. The reasons of the Committee for entertaining this apprehension are the following:—1st, That in all the CHURCH COURTS OF THE ESTABLISHMENT an overwhelming anxiety has been expressed on the subject, reprobating, in unmeasured terms, the very idea of employing as Visitors, "*Episcopalians, Papists, Socinians, and Voluntaries*." 2d, That the EARL OF ABERDEEN, in one of his Parliamentary speeches, mentions it as a groundless "apprehension on this head, that the Universities would be in any degree under the control of persons who might be *DISSENTERS, men of any religion, or no religion!*" And, in his published letter on the subject, the same noble Lord, after admitting that he has not "any degree of confidence in his Majesty's present Ministers," and after confessing "that recent appointments" (meaning, of course, the appointment of the Church Commission, where one Dissenter was allowed to have a place among *ten* Churchmen) "may afford reasonable ground for anxiety upon this subject,"—yet declares that "the positive and repeated assurances which have been made, forbid him to believe that the Boards will be constituted in any objectionable manner, or that the pledges thus solemnly given will not be honourably fulfilled;" and, 3d, That even the Senatus Academicus of the University of Edinburgh, in their late Memorial to Lord Melbourne, state, that "they had pressed earnestly upon the Lord Advocate's consideration, that the right of appointing the Members of the court, in whom the management of the University was to be vested, should belong to the Crown, the CHURCH, the town council, the Bar, and the Medical Colleges in Edinburgh,"—thus, in a great measure, excluding Dissenters from any management of Institutions in which they have so deep an interest, and contribute so largely to support. To show the utter absurdity of this, it may be noticed that, according to a statement of Sir William Rae, in his place in the House of Commons, on the 27th of April last, "there are about *TWO-THIRDS* of the *landed proprietors* in *Scotland* *Episcopalians*." And they, with all the other Dissenters, must be excluded from being Visitors, Managers, or Professors, in any of the Scottish Universities; and prevented from having their children taught in their own country, except by those sworn to maintain the peculiarities of an Established Church, to which they profess to be conscientiously opposed.

VIII. That in accordance with the views entertained by this Committee, as expressed in the preceding statements, it should be recognised as a general

principle, that no reform of the Universities, as national institutions, can be satisfactory, which does not open the Chairs to qualified persons, without reference to religious denomination, and confine the system of instruction to literature and science; leaving every sect, and the Established Church among the rest, to provide for the theological education of its own ministers.

IX. That every legitimate exertion be made to prevent the passing of the Bill with the obnoxious clauses proposed; and that it be recommended to attempt this, by memorializing Government, petitioning Parliament, or corresponding with individual members of the legislature, as shall be judged most expedient.

X. That, in the event of all opposition proving vain, and the Bill passing as proposed, Dissenters must find themselves under the necessity of breaking off their present connexion with the National Universities, by allowing, or requiring, the Students connected with their Churches to attend such seminaries as the Andersonian University in Glasgow, and similar institutions in Edinburgh, Aberdeen, and elsewhere, which the circumstances of the case would originate; and that this committee will recommend it to the synod of their own Church, in particular, to adopt this measure. In explanation here, it is necessary to observe, that at an average, 150 students attend the Secession Divinity Halls every season, and that each of them must have paid upwards of £30 for attendance on the literary and philosophical classes—amounting in all to about £5,000, independently of what is paid by numbers connected with Dissenting Churches, who either have no view to the ministry, or relinquish it before reaching the Divinity Halls. And supposing an equal number only of all other classes of Dissenters to act on the plan referred to, there would be a loss of upwards of £10,000, paid by one description of Dissenting students to the Universities during the curriculum of four years. The proportion of congregations in the Secession alone, being about the third of those belonging to the Establishment, an idea may easily be formed of the proportion of funds contributed by the Secession students towards remunerating the literary and philosophical Professorships in the Universities of the country. Nor can any one who has given due attention to the subject, doubt that the sum might be much better expended in securing a far more valuable, because a more Christian education, to the holy ministry.

XI. That a Petition to the House of Commons, founded on the above Resolutions and signed by the Chairman and Clerk, be immediately transmitted to the Lord Advocate for presentation.

JOHN BROWN, D.D., *Chairman.*  
ADAM THOMSON, A.M., *Clerk.*

On the 4th of April (1834), an overture from the presbytery of Dunfermline brought before the United synod the subject of a union with the Relief Church. This overture proposed, "That the synod shall take such steps as may be deemed necessary to begin and maintain a friendly intercourse with the Relief synod, as a sister-church, and that this overture shall lie on the table of the synod till next meeting, in order that all parties concerned may be acquainted with it before it be discussed." The synod allowed the overture to lie upon their table. At their meeting in spring, the following year, they entered upon the consideration of it. A considerable number of members delivered their sentiments on the subject. Some were for appointing a committee to take steps for immediate union. Those who supported this motion were few. Others were of opinion, that the synod should express a desire of union, and send a deputation to the Relief synod



as a token of brotherly regard. The general feeling of those, who spoke on the subject, was, that a union with the Relief Church, on scriptural terms, was in itself desirable ; but that it would be proper to delay, at present, adopting any decisive measures for accomplishing this object. It was finally agreed to remit the overture "to the serious and prayerful consideration of sessions and presbyteries ;" and the clerk was instructed to give notice of this resolution to the Relief synod, "in a kind and respectful letter." At next meeting reports were received from four presbyteries. One of these was in favour of union ; the other three expressed themselves friendly to the object, but considered delay advisable. Petitions and memorials were at the same time presented from fourteen congregations and one session ; all of which, with one exception, were favourable to the proposed union. A communication was also read from the Relief synod, which breathed an excellent spirit. After some deliberation, the United synod agreed to renew their expression of esteem and affection for the Relief Church ; and gave an injunction to the presbyteries and sessions, to take the subject of a union "into their deliberate and prayerful consideration," and to report to the synod at next meeting.

When the synod met in April 1836, reports and petitions were presented from fifteen presbyteries, fifty-two sessions, and nine congregations. From the tenor of these papers it appeared, that a considerable diversity of opinion prevailed amongst both ministers and people. Some proposed that a union should be immediately accomplished, others that it should be delayed. As the synod had not time to read the mass of papers that was laid upon their table, they appointed a committee to consider and classify them, and to report concerning the various opinions contained in them. This committee was also instructed to obtain authentic information concerning the principles and administration of the Relief Church. The report of the committee was to the following effect :— "That they had considered and classified said reports and petitions, and that from these papers, and the information received in their meetings, they deem it their duty to state, that there does not appear to be that harmony of view and desire among our own congregations, on the subject of the union, which would justify the committee in recommending to the synod the adoption of measures for its immediate consummation ; but they recommend to the synod to express their 'love in the truth,' for their esteemed brethren of the Relief Church, and their pleasing conviction, that there is so much coincidence in Scriptural view and feeling betwixt the two bodies, as to encourage the hope of a complete union, at no

distant period, on grounds consonant with the word of God, and the comfort and edification of both churches." It was resolved, at this meeting, to appoint a deputation to wait upon the Relief synod, who were expected to meet during the course of the ensuing month, and to communicate to them "the sentiments of fraternal Christian affection which this church bears to the Relief Church, and our ardent desire for their spiritual prosperity." The persons appointed on this deputation were Drs. Pringle, Peddie, Kidston, Ritchie, Professor Duncan, and Mr. William M'Kelvie of Balgedie. Only three of these brethren had it in their power to fulfil their appointment.

Dr. Peddie reported to the synod, at the September meeting, that Dr. Kidston, Dr. Ritchie, and himself, had waited on the Relief synod, and had been most kindly received. He introduced, at the same time, a deputation of the Relief brethren, who had been appointed to wait upon the United Associate synod. The deputation consisted of Messrs. Matthew Alison of Kilbarchan (moderator of Relief synod); Daniel Gorrie of Kettle; Alexander Harvey of Glasgow; Francis Muir of Leith; and James Smith Taylor of Coldstream. Dr. Mitchell was requested by the moderator to open the conference with prayer, which was done along with the singing of Psalms. Mr. Alison then rose and read an extract from the minutes of the Relief synod, containing the following resolutions, which they had adopted at their last meeting :—

" I. That a union with the United Associate Church, on Scriptural grounds, and without merging the principle of the free-communion of saints, which has so long been a distinctive tenet of the Relief synod, is greatly to be desired, and ought to be sought after with prudence, deliberation, and perseverance.

" II. That as some of the sessions, and it is believed congregations in the synod, are not prepared for the contemplated union, it is necessary that proper means should be employed to remove objections to the proposal; and for this purpose, it is especially desirable, that Christian and ministerial intercourse, by interchange of pulpit services, and otherwise, should be cultivated between the two bodies, if it shall be found that such correspondence is not prohibited by the standards of the Secession Church.

" III. That the synod send a deputation of their number to the next meeting of the synod of the United Associate Church, to express their high respect for that body, and their desire for its prosperity and welfare, and to make proffer of the intercourse referred to, as the most likely method of promoting mutual acquaintance, and removing prejudice, and thus of ultimately effecting an incorporated union."

After reading these resolutions, Mr. Alison made a few statements in support of them. Some of the other members of the deputation also addressed the synod; and the impression produced, by means of their speeches, upon members of court, was exceedingly favourable to the cause of union. A suitable reply was made, by the moderator, to the deputation; and several members of synod delivered their sentiments. At the close of the conference Mr. Alison offered up prayer, at the request of the synod, and a few verses of a Psalm were sung. The synod delayed giving any decision concerning the proposal submitted to them, in the above resolutions, with regard to holding Christian and ministerial intercourse with the brethren of the Relief Church; but remitted the consideration of this business to the committee formerly appointed, who were required to report at next meeting.

The synod received the report of this committee on the 12th of May, 1837. After receiving it, they did not consider it expedient to discuss the proposition of intermediate intercommunion, as they were of opinion that such discussion was not calculated, in present circumstances, to promote the object in view: but they appointed a committee "to have a free conversation with any committee that the Relief synod may think fit to appoint, on the circumstances which make the proposed union between the churches desirable, the difficulties which lie in the way of effecting it, and the principles on which it must be based; and to report the result of the conversation to the synod." They enjoined their clerk to give immediate notice of this resolution to the moderator of the Relief synod. A corresponding committee has been appointed by the synod of Relief; and a meeting of the committees of the two synods was held in Glasgow, in the month of July 1838. As no meeting of the supreme courts has been held since the united committees met, of course no official report has yet been given of their proceedings. But it is understood that the meeting in Glasgow was a most agreeable one; that both parties were unreserved in their communications with each other; and that the whole of the deliberations were conducted in a spirit of great kindness and fidelity; and there is little reason to doubt, that when the two committees report to their respective synods the result of this conference, it will have a happy influence in accelerating the progress of a union, which the representatives of both churches have already declared to be highly desirable. What is there to prevent such an event from being now consummated? The two churches are agreed on all the main points of doctrine, discipline, and government; and should there be any diversities of administration, these can be made the subject, either of forbearance, or of future arrange-

ment. The eventful nature of the times in which we live, and the extraordinary struggle at present carrying on betwixt state-endowed and unendowed churches, render it an imperative duty on those, who hold the same general views of ecclesiastical polity, to merge smaller differences, and to unite together for the purpose of giving more complete effect to the grand principle involved in the struggle, viz. *entire religious freedom*.

An important declaration was made by the United synod, at their meeting in September 1836, on the spiritual relationship existing between minister and people, and on the nature of that claim which the former has to receive stipend from the latter. Mr. Arneil, who was for some time minister of the Secession congregation in Portobello, and whom unfavourable circumstances had obliged to demit his charge, raised a process before the Court of Session against certain persons, who were alleged to be members of his congregation, for arrears of stipend. The Edinburgh presbytery, to whom the individuals who were prosecuted applied for protection, brought the matter before the supreme court, requesting them to give to these persons advice and assistance, and also to issue a declaration, "as to the claim which the ministers of the Secession Church have to their stipend." The following is the deliverance which the synod gave on this subject:—"After deliberation, the synod agreed to state, that as in the compact between every minister of this church, and his people, it is assumed that he is wholly devoted to the duties of his office, so a suitable maintenance from his people is obviously a dictate of justice, and is acknowledged, in the call which he receives, to be an imperative Christian duty; that the word of God, which is the only authority and law as to the support of ministers of the gospel, distinctly embodies and enforces this principle; that the above principle not only pervades the word of God, but is exhibited in the form of an express commandment, 'Let him that is taught in the word, communicate to him that teacheth, in all good things;' that there can be no appeal in any thing connected with the support of Christian ministers, excepting to the Lord Jesus Christ, speaking in the word of God, and giving his sanction to, and prescribing the arrangements of the church in this matter; and that from the beginning, the practice of those portions of the Secession Church, of which the United Associate synod is composed, has been in uniform accordance with these statements. Agreeably to these views, the synod hereby declares that every minister ordained to the pastoral office in this church, binds and obliges himself to submit, in the matter of temporal support, as well as in all other matters connected with his office, to the decision of those spiritual overseers to whom he has promised sub-

jection in the Lord, and disclaims all right to prosecute for stipend, in courts of civil law, acknowledging that the high and sacred claim which Christ has given him on the conscience of his people, is a security which he feels to be perfectly inadequate. In emitting this declaration, the synod is to be understood as simply giving expression to the consuetudinary law of our church, and feels assured, that so far from weakening, this declaration will strengthen and consolidate the hold which her ministers already have on their conscience, and the affection, and the liberality of their flocks."

Some enactments have of late been made by the United synod, affecting, to a certain extent, the power and constitution of the ecclesiastical judicatories of the associated body. One of these refers to the mode of deciding in the case of competing or transporting calls. For a hundred years after the commencement of the Secession, the law and practice of the Secession judicatories were, that when a preacher received a call from two or more congregations, the competition was decided (after the hearing of parties) by the supreme court, to whose decision the matter was ordinarily referred by the presbyteries, within whose bounds the competing congregations were situated; and the preacher was bound to submit to the judgment of the synod, whether it accorded with his own inclination or not. The same authoritative mode of procedure was observed in the case of a transporting call given to an ordained minister. It belonged to the supreme court to judge and determine whether he should be continued in his present charge, or be removed, in accordance with the call thus given, to a new scene of labour. By an enactment of the synod, in September 1833, this power of deciding in the cases referred to, has been voluntarily renounced; and it is now declared to be the law of the United Associate synod, "That, in the case of a transporting call, or of competing calls, the decision shall, in the first instance, be left to the individual who has received such call or calls; but that should he, or any of the parties interested in the case, desire to have the advice and judgment of the church courts in the matter, it shall be competent to bring it before them in the usual way." This enactment was opposed by a considerable portion of the synod, on the ground of its being an infringement of the presbyterian order recognised by the Secession Church, and also on the ground of its holding out a temptation to underhand dealing, in the way of private negotiation between parties, in the giving and receiving of calls. But the opposition was unavailing. Several ministers recorded their dissent from the deed of synod sanctioning the above alteration. A committee was appointed to prepare regulations, which might serve as a directory to

church courts, in all cases of competing and transporting calls that might come before them ; and with the special view of preventing abuses from being committed under covert of the new law. The committee executed the task assigned them. They laid upon the synod's table a set of regulations, apparently well-adapted for the purpose. The synod ordered them to be printed, but have not yet given them a formal sanction.

Another enactment, of the description above referred to, is one which was carried amid much opposition at the meeting of synod in September 1837. At an early period of the Secession, the question was discussed in the church courts, Whether lay elders from vacant congregations ought to have a seat in the superior ecclesiastical judicatories, such as presbyteries and synods ? And it was determined by the Fathers of the Secession, that they ought not, as they judged it inconsistent with presbyterian parity, that there should be more lay elders than ministers in these courts of review. The same question was brought forward and discussed repeatedly, at later periods, and uniformly with the same result, till the meeting of synod now mentioned ; when it was declared, by a decided majority, that elders from the sessions of congregations, where there is no fixed teacher, shall be " allowed a seat in presbytery and synod." Let the number of *teaching* elders be diminished, at any time, to the lowest possible amount, in any of the judicatories, by deaths and removals, this enactment secures a regular and permanent supply of *lay* elders for the conducting of business. According to this new enactment, the *lay* representative of a session belonging to the United Secession Church, resembles the monarch of the British Empire : *he never dies*.

The attention of the synod was, at this period, drawn to a subject of vast importance to the religious interests of the country, namely, the monopoly which had been so long enjoyed, by the king's printers in Scotland, of printing and publishing the authorized version of the Word of God. Their patent for this odious monopoly was about to expire, and the friends of a free Bible circulation were making exertions to prevent the renewal of it. A committee had been appointed by the House of Commons, to consider how far it would be expedient to abolish the monopoly ; and it was considered proper, that while this committee was sitting and engaged in taking evidence upon the subject, the United Associate synod should contribute what share of influence they possessed, in preventing the renewal of the obnoxious patent. In consequence of an overture presented to them, at their meeting in May, 1837, by Mr. Adam Thomson, minister of Coldstream,

they agreed to petition parliament on the subject,—and they appointed a committee to watch over the progress of this business, and to take such steps concerning it as the exigencies of the case might render expedient. Of this committee Mr. Thomson was appointed convener.

When the committee of the House of Commons gave in their report, at the close of the session in 1838, it was regarded as favourable to the abolition of the monopoly. It was understood, however, that secret exertions were making, by the friends of the Established Church in this country, to get the monopoly renewed in her favour; and, as there was little hope of their succeeding in this, a proposal was made that the patent, hitherto enjoyed by the king's printers, should be transferred to the Scottish universities. In support of this proposal, it was alleged, that this would afford the best guarantee for maintaining the integrity of the sacred text. This proposal was successfully resisted by the convener of the synod's committee, who undertook a journey to London, and exerted himself with great assiduity in counteracting the exertions of those who were friendly to this scheme.

At length Lord John Russell, her Majesty's Secretary of State for the home department, publicly announced in the House of Commons, to the satisfaction of the friends of a free Bible circulation, that "it was not the intention of Government to renew the patent, or any direct monopoly in favour of any corporation. They did not mean (he said) to prevent in Scotland the Scriptures being sold at the lowest price; but they did mean to preserve the purity of the text from interpolation and misconstruction; the means he should state on a future day."—When Dr. Thomson reported to the synod, at their meeting in June, 1839, this successful result of the labours of their committee, the synod were highly gratified, and unanimously voted thanks to Dr. Thomson for the exertions which he had made in this cause.

Only a few days, however, elapsed when the synod took the alarm, in consequence of information being conveyed to them, through the medium of the newspapers, that Lord John Russell had made a public announcement on this subject in the House of Commons, from which it appeared, that the intentions of Government, in reference to this question, were materially altered from those which had been formerly expressed. This announcement was to the following effect:—He said,—“It was proposed to incorporate a limited number of persons, say five, to whom would be granted the exclusive right of printing and publishing the Bible. One of these was to be the moderator of the Assembly of the Church of Scotland, two others were to be divines of the Church of Scotland,

and two others were to be laymen, but members of the Church of Scotland; and, if any larger number of five should constitute the board, it would still be constituted on the same principle. It was proposed that this board should have the exclusive right of printing and publishing the Bible, upon condition of allowing the free importation of the authorized version of the Bible, printed by authority in England. Another condition was, that the board should have power to grant an *imprimatur* for Bibles to be published by certain publishers, but that such liberty should not be granted, unless the board appointed correctors of the press, or unless some person was appointed by the board, to supervise the Bible so printed, and see that the version was correct. With these limitations, it was proposed generally, that no preference should be given to particular publishers, but the publishers must, in addition, enter into conditions, by bond, to pay any costs that might ensue from a failure in the performance of any one of the conditions, or the costs occasioned by any incorrect version, which might be circulated in consequence of the *imprimatur* granted to them."

Such was the scheme which, according to Lord John Russell, the Government intended to adopt with regard to the printing and publishing of the authorized version of the Scriptures. The synod immediately appointed a committee to draw up a memorial to the Home Secretary, and a petition to parliament on the subject. The memorial presented to his Lordship was to the following effect:—

To the Right Honourable the Lord John Russell, Her Majesty's Secretary of State for the Home Department, the Memorial of the Rev. the United Associate Synod of the Secession Church of Scotland.

MY LORD,—In the Parliamentary report of the Standard newspaper, of date 11th current, the following paragraph appears, as reporting a statement made by your Lordship respecting the measure which the Government is about to propose for printing the Bible in Scotland:—

'John Russell said, it was not intended to give the exclusive right of printing the Holy Scriptures in Scotland to any corporation or individual. He should propose that the Crown, by Royal Charter, should incorporate a number of persons, say five, to whom should be granted the exclusive right of allowing the printing of the Bible. One of these five individuals would be the Moderator of the Church of Scotland, two other Divines of that Church, and the other two, Members of the Church of Scotland,—this board would have the exclusive right of authorizing the printing of the Bible under certain restrictions.'

It must be known to your Lordship that this synod has taken a very deep interest in the question respecting the printing of the Bible, and that both by Deputies and Memorials they have endeavoured to impress their views of the importance of the unrestricted printing of the Scriptures upon your Lordship and the House of Commons. From the information which they last received, they had been led to believe, that although their views were not to be adopted to their full extent, a Board would be appointed solely for the purpose of attending to the accuracy of the text of the Sacred Volume. To this measure your memorialists would have offered no opposition, if the Board had been so

composed as to include persons of various religious denominations. The plan, however, which the statement above quoted announces, is so very different from what they had been led to anticipate, and so entirely opposed to their conscientious opinions of what justice and the interests of religion demand, that when it was announced in their court, it produced the very deepest feeling of disappointment and sorrow; and a resolution was immediately adopted to employ all the means in their power to prevent its being carried into effect.

The synod beg to state to your Lordship, that they are firmly persuaded that, if no restrictions whatever were laid upon the printing of the Bible, the great objects desired to be gained,—namely, the accuracy of the text, and the cheapness of the volume,—would be better attained than by any other course which can be adopted. But such a measure as this now announced would, they are convinced, be attended with the most injurious consequences, and would excite amongst the Dissenters of Scotland, one unmixed feeling of dissatisfaction and mortification.

The synod are aware that the declaration reported as made by your Lordship, may be inaccurate; but such is the importance which they attach to the subject, that they lose no time in addressing your Lordship, with the view of obtaining some accurate information respecting it, and in the hope that a measure which, in their judgment, continues the monopoly in a form even more offensive than that in which it previously existed, will not be entertained.

In conclusion, this synod beg to state to your Lordship that no measure, in their opinion, could possibly give less satisfaction to the great bodies of Dissenters in Scotland, than a plan which proposes to vest in a Board, composed exclusively of ministers and members of the Church of Scotland, the power of allowing the printing of the Scriptures, with whatever restrictions its appointment may be accompanied; thus in effect, and for the first time, giving to that Church the entire control of the printing of the Sacred Volume, and the power of defeating the great objects which this synod has ever sought to obtain, and adding to the invidious distinctions among religious denominations, already too numerous, and the occasion of unspeakable injury to religion and to the commonwealth. We have the honour to remain your Lordship's most obedient servants.

Signed in our presence, and by our appointment, at Edinburgh, this 13th June, 1839.

JOHN M'KERROW, *Moderator.*

WILLIAM KIDSTON, *Synod Clerk.*

A deputation, appointed by the synod's committee, also proceeded to London, to represent to her Majesty's government how obnoxious the proposed scheme was to the dissenters of Scotland, and to obtain, if possible, an alteration of it. This deputation consisted of the Rev. Dr. Thomson of Coldstream and the Rev. Mr. Harper of Leith. What the deputation chiefly insisted on, in their interviews with the official men connected with the government, was the omission of the clauses providing that the board should consist of members of the Church of Scotland. They also pointed out "the injurious consequences that might arise from an abuse of the discretionary powers to be vested in the board, particularly as regards their right to judge of the qualifications of correctors of the press, and to call for proof-sheets for revision, which might lead to an annoying and vexatious interference with the interests of individuals in the printing of the Scriptures." It was understood that the control of the board would extend to editions of the Bible having marginal references or brief annotations. This part of the plan was considered peculiarly

objectionable, and every effort was made to counteract it. The deputation represented in strong terms, to those in power, "that a denominational board with such powers was most objectionable, on account of the party bias which would barely fail to be given to their editions of the Bible; and that no board, however constituted, could be invested with such powers, consistently with the rights of private judgment."

The result of the exertions made by the opponents of the Bible monopoly was, that though the "denominational board" has been appointed, the monopoly is virtually abolished: inasmuch as the free importation is allowed of copies of the Scriptures printed by authority in England or Ireland,—and inasmuch as that the Lord Advocate is authorized to grant permission to any person making application to him, to print and publish Bibles and Testaments, provided security shall be given that they shall be in exact conformity with some specified edition, "being any one of the editions published by authority in Great Britain,"—a copy of which is to be transmitted to the secretary of the board; and while the work is passing through the press, such portions of it as the Lord Advocate shall prescribe, are to be forwarded to the secretary, from time to time, to give the board a "full and ample opportunity, during the progress of the work, that it has been faithfully and correctly executed."

In the course of this narrative, numerous and gratifying proofs have been given of the spirit of missionary enterprise, which has characterized the Secession, as a church, in all the periods of her history, and which has imparted vitality and power to her operations. While her ministers and congregations were comparatively few in number, she not only carried the light of the gospel, by means of her preachers, into many a dark corner of our own land, but she sent labourers to the benighted districts of Ireland, to Nova Scotia, to Canada, and to the then thinly-peopled wilds of America. By her instrumentality, churches have been planted in these distant regions, and multitudes have heard the joyful sound of salvation, who might otherwise have lived and died in a state of spiritual destitution. All this she accomplished by the free-will offerings of her people, who, though the greater part of them were in a humble station of life, contributed cheerfully of their scanty earnings, that they might spread abroad the glories of their Redeemer's name in foreign lands.

During the last ten years, a new and powerful impulse has been given to the missionary spirit of the United Secession Church. She has organized, and is carrying on with considerable vigour, a scheme of operation much more systematic and extensive, than she has done at any former period of her

history; and, if we may judge from the regular increase of her missionary fund, and from the number of labourers whom she is sending forth, her exertions are every year augmenting. In the month of April, 1829, the United synod resolved on pursuing "a more extended course of missionary exertions for the propagation of the gospel in the more destitute parts of our country;" and the following scheme of home missions was adopted:—"That the preachers employed in the home missionary stations shall be appointed to the different presbyteries, by the sub-committee on missions, from among the preachers, who, for the time being, have no synodical appointments; that these preachers shall, as much as possible, be stationary in the preaching-stations during the time they are employed; that, while thus employed, they shall receive the sum of fifteen shillings\* of stipend for each Sabbath, exclusive of board, which the presbyteries shall endeavour to provide; and that, during their residence in these stations, they shall, besides a regular ministration of the gospel on Sabbaths, occupy themselves as much as possible in all proper efforts to promote and extend the interests of religion, especially by communicating religious instruction to the young, visiting the sick, and teaching privately, as prudence dictates. The synod further enjoined the presbyteries, within whose bounds these preaching-stations are, to watch over them with care, and particularly to appoint such members as shall be contiguous, to visit them frequently; that they shall endeavour to procure as large contributions as possible from the stations themselves, for the support of the gospel, that the labours of the preachers thus afforded may be the longer continued; and that each presbytery shall make a report to the synod concerning these stations, of the money collected by them, the money expended, and their apparent success." It was afterwards resolved, that a missionary committee shall be annually appointed, by whom all missionary business shall be conducted, and who shall prepare, for publication, an annual report of their proceedings; that missionary operations shall be extended, according to the state of the funds, and the applications from presbyteries; that every missionary station, when formed into a congregation, shall no longer be considered as connected with the committee on missions, but shall be treated by the presbytery of the bounds in the same manner with other vacancies; and that each probationer shall keep a journal of his proceedings in the missionary stations, which he shall submit to the committee on missions, in sufficient time to be considered by them, before making up the report.

\* This sum has since been raised to the ordinary weekly allowance for preachers—one guinea.

On the 13th of September, 1831, the synod resolved to enter on a foreign mission, and they appointed the missionary committee to ascertain what might be the most eligible field of labour. A variety of circumstances pointed to Canada, and the adjoining provinces of British America, as presenting a promising field of usefulness; and, after mature deliberation, the synod unanimously resolved to send, without delay, three or four missionaries to labour in that quarter of the world. Their committee was instructed to look out for suitable persons to undertake this mission. Three members of synod, every way qualified for the work, immediately volunteered their services to go as missionaries to Canada: these were—Messrs. Thomas Christie, minister of Holme in Orkney; William Proudfoot, minister at Pitrodie in Carse of Gowrie; and William Robertson, minister in Cupar of Fife. Having resigned their charges in this country, they sailed for their destination in the month of July, 1832. Mr. Robertson died of cholera, at Montreal, about a month after his arrival. These were followed, in the spring of the following year, by Mr. William Taylor, who was for some time minister at Peebles, and Messrs. George Murray and Robert Thornton, both of whom were ordained in this country, with a special view to the Canadian mission. Two additional labourers were sent to Canada in 1834; namely, Messrs. James Skinner and John Cassie. At the meeting of the synod in April, it was resolved, that the brethren who had been sent as missionaries to Canada, should be erected into a presbytery, under the designation of *The Missionary Presbytery of the Canadas, in connexion with the United Associate synod of the Secession Church in Scotland*; and it was resolved, at the same time, to send catechists and Gaelic preachers to that country.

On the 1st of August, 1834, slavery was declared by an act of the British legislature, to be abolished in the West India Islands; and the synod considered that a fair opening was now presented to them for commencing missionary operations in some of these islands. At their meeting in September, they directed their committee to take immediate measures for sending two or more missionaries to Jamaica; and they gave their sanction to the following proposal, which was submitted to them by some of the brethren, who were anxious to encourage a missionary spirit in their congregations:—"That congregations shall be allowed to support missionaries, by distinct funds under the superintendence of the synod, with the understanding that they may present suggestions regarding the selection of agents and spheres of operation, and be permitted to maintain direct correspondence with the agents; these suggestions to be submitted to the committee on missions, for

their consideration, and in the regular form brought before the synod."

During the year 1835, four missionaries in connexion with the United Secession Church, sailed for the West Indies; three of whom commenced labouring in the island of Jamaica, and the fourth in Trinidad. The three that went to Jamaica, were Mr. James Paterson (who was for some time minister at Auchtergaven, in this country), Mr. William Niven, and Mr. Peter Anderson. Mr. Paterson is supported by the Broughton Place congregation, Edinburgh; Mr. Niven, by the presbytery of Stirling and Falkirk; and Mr. Anderson, by the Regent Place congregation, Glasgow. The missionary who is stationed in Trinidad, is Mr. Alexander Kennedy, who is supported by the Greyfriars congregation, Glasgow. The same year two Nova Scotian preachers (Messrs. Fraser and M'Kenzie), who were acquainted with the Gaelic language, were added to the mission in Canada.

Toward the close of 1836, and in the beginning of 1837, the hands of the brethren in Jamaica were strengthened by the accession of two new missionaries, who were sent from this country, Messrs. William Jamieson and James Niven. Mr. Jamieson was sent out, and is maintained by the Rose-street congregation, Edinburgh. Two additional labourers, Messrs. James Roy and George Lawrence, were also sent, during the last-mentioned year, to Canada. The Rev. William Glen, an excellent Persian scholar, who was for some time a minister of the Secession in Annan, and latterly in the employment of the Scottish Missionary Society, and of the British and Foreign Bible Society at Astracan, has lately left this country, as an agent of the United Associate synod for Tabreez, in Persia, where he is to be employed in the important work of translating the Old Testament into the Persian language. A few of the congregations have it in contemplation to maintain a mission in some of the South Sea Islands. With a view to this, they have raised the sum of £300, and placed it at the disposal of the Rev. John Williams, the South Sea missionary, in connexion with the London Society, to defray the expense of an exploratory voyage, which he has engaged to undertake. "Mr. Williams is to endeavour to ascertain the character and habits of the islands visited, together with the facilities existing for the introduction of the gospel among them. He is to carry with him eight or ten native missionaries from the islands already evangelized, and place them in the scene selected for the new mission, as pioneers to the ministers who may be sent out from the Secession Church; and he is then to communicate to the missionary committee an account of the voyage, and of the prospects which it may have

opened up, that it may be considered whether the plan should be prosecuted." In addition to the above-mentioned missionaries, Mr. John Aird was sent as catechist to Jamaica in 1837; and, in the following year, other four persons were sent in the same capacity to labour among the negro population of that island, namely, Messrs. William Kay, James Elmslie, Davidson Black, and David Moir.

During last summer (1838), Mr. John Monnard, a native of Geneva, after completing a course of study at the University of Edinburgh, and the Divinity Hall of the Secession Church, was ordained by the United Associate presbytery of Edinburgh, and sent by the missionary committee of the United synod to France, to be employed in that country, as a preacher of the gospel, in connexion with the United Secession Church. Those who were acquainted with his character and talents, considered him as eminently fitted for the work of an evangelist in France. He arrived in that country in the month of July, and only a few weeks elapsed, after his arrival, when he was consigned to an early tomb. He died on the 3d of August, at Vadencourt, near Amiens. Another agent for the continent of Europe has lately been engaged by the committee—the Rev. Charles F. Major, an evangelical dissenting minister, at present labouring in the city of Strasburg. The formal accession of this person to the principles of the United Secession Church, has been lately received. Mr. Major's declaration of adherence is such a gratifying document, that I cheerfully give it a place in this record:—

"I hereby do declare, that, after a conscientious examination of the 'Testimony of the United Associate synod of the Secession Church of Scotland,' I have found the leading doctrines and practices therein defended in harmony with the holy word of God, and with what I have been accustomed to consider as the pure faith of the protestant church. I do, therefore, find no scruple in my conscience solemnly to profess, that the doctrine I have been accustomed to preach, and the views I have held on church government, are the same as those of the United Secession Church of Scotland.

"This being the case, I have considered it my duty to accept from the great Head of the church, our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, as a benefit by him, bestowed upon my solitary labours of love, the proposal that has been made, from henceforward to be considered and treated as a minister in connexion with the synod; and, after having been officially recognized by the synod's presbytery of London, I cordially accept the proposal of the synod's committee for foreign missions to act as their missionary on the continent, hoping and

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praying that the Christian zeal and charity which has this union, may be beneficial to the church of Christ generally, by making Christ crucified known the more amongst the people of the continent.

"C. F. MAJOR, V."

"STRASBURG, November 23, 1838."

In the month of September last year, Mr. William was ordained by the presbytery of Dunfermline, with to his being employed as a missionary in Jamaica congregations belonging to the presbytery now met have engaged to raise the funds necessary for his support, and he goes forth to that field of labour, as the presbytery missionary. The Secession has lately obtained a footing on the Shetland Isles. During the years 1836-7, these were visited by ministers from the United Associate Church, and, during last year, a congregation was formed in the town of Lerwick, in connexion with the United Secession Church. A place of worship also has been erected, and funds collected from the congregations under the influence of the synod. It is expected that, ere long, other preaching stations will be occupied by Secession labourers in these islands.

Such is an outline of the missionary exertions which have been made by the United Associate synod, during the last ten years. The following is the result of these exertions as stated in the last Annual Report (for 1837), published by the synod's committee. There are fifty home missionary stations, a considerable proportion of which receive a weekly sermon, by means of the synod's preachers; and of these, some have preachers sent to them at more distant intervals. The greater part of the expense necessary for the maintenance of these stations, is defrayed from the Synod fund; and, in several instances, it is generously defrayed by the liberality of particular congregations taking upon themselves the whole charge of one or more stations. "It is to be said (says the Report) to know, that no small proportion of these stations may be regarded as flourishing; that the number of attendances at them, though exceedingly varied, are in many instances considerable, varying from one to three hundred; that some of them can tell of augmented strength during the past year; that classes, prayer-meetings, &c. are being multiplied; and that occasional examples of striking conversions bespeak the presence and operation of the Spirit."

Besides the home stations, there are eleven missionary stations in Canada; six in Jamaica (including Mr. Scott, lately of the Dunfermline presbytery); one in Trinidad; also in

tinental agent, Mr. Major; and the Persian agent, Mr. Glen, employed in the translation of the Scriptures.

It will be gratifying to my readers to mark the progress of the missionary spirit in the Secession congregations, by the gradual increase of the mission fund, during the successive years that have elapsed since the new scheme of missionary operations was adopted. The following are the sums that have been collected during these years, according to the statements published by the treasurer in the Annual Reports:—

1829,	.	.	.	£60	10	11½
1830,	.	.	.	739	11	6½
1831,	.	.	.	928	11	1
1832,	.	.	.	1265	19	10½
1833,	.	.	.	1366	0	3¼
1834,	.	.	.	1407	19	5
1835,	.	.	.	1673	1	3
1836,	.	.	.	3537	3	1½
1837,	.	.	.	4526	12	8½
1838, & 1839	.	.	.	7107	18	7½

The small sum that stands at the head of this list, must not be understood to constitute the whole amount that was collected, during that year, by the United Secession Church for missions. Many of its congregations were giving liberally, every year, for a considerable period, previous to the first date above-mentioned, for the support of missions in connexion with other denominations. But the above sum constituted the commencement of the fund for Secession missions; and it is pleasing to observe, that the sum is steadily increasing every year, though there are many of the congregations that still give liberally for the support of missions connected with other religious societies. It is proper also to add, that the sums above stated do not include the whole that is annually collected for Secession missions; for there are several congregations, both in Edinburgh and Glasgow, that support, by their individual efforts, home and foreign missionaries and catechists, whose funds, expended on these objects, do not pass through the hand of the synod treasurer, and of course do not appear in the published accounts. It is not overrating the sum so generously expended by those congregations, if we shall compute it to amount to £1,000.

Besides these pecuniary exertions made by the United Secession Church, for the extension of the Redeemer's kingdom, at home and abroad, a spirit of prayer has also been poured down, of late years, to a considerable extent upon her congregations; so that there are comparatively few of the congre-

\* This sum includes what was collected from 16th October 1837 to 1st May 1839.

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gations where there are not either weekly or monthly congregational meetings established for prayer, and the of religious intelligence, besides district societies in the congregations, for prayer and religious conference these things are to be regarded as tokens for good ; and are here recorded, not as reasons for boasting, but as cause of thanksgiving. While we ought to feel grateful for that that is doing, we should blush that so little is done. is much room left for improvement. We are as yet the commencement of the work. The field before us world lying in wickedness. Let none rest satisfied until our labourers shall be seen cultivating every portion of the field ; and let all take encouragement from the promise that " the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea."

## CHAPTER XXI.

Voluntary church controversy—Rev. Dr. Chalmers' description of it—Statement of the question—Misrepresentations corrected—Rev. A. Marshall's sermon—Reviewed in Edinburgh Christian Instructor—Mr. Marshall's letter to the Rev. Dr. Thomson—Reviewer's Reply—"Ecclesiastical Establishments farther considered" by Mr. Marshall—Powerful impression produced by Mr. Marshall's publications—Voluntary Church Association formed in Edinburgh—Mr. A. C. Dick's speech—Extracts from it—Voluntary Church Association formed in Glasgow—Similar associations formed over the country—Voluntary Church Magazine—Voluntary church motion in House of Commons—Motion negatived—Extensive diffusion of Voluntary church principles—Associations formed for support of National church—Glasgow association—Church of Scotland Magazine—Vindication of Establishments by Dr. Inglis—Reply by Mr. Marshall—Proceedings of General Assembly—Veto Act—Regulations with regard to calls—Veto Act condemned by Anti-patronage Society—Dr. M'Crie's opinion concerning it—Auchterarder Case—Illegality of Veto Act declared by Court of Session—Case appealed to House of Lords—Lethendy Case—Church extension scheme—Demand for new endowments—Remarkable discovery of the church-extensionists—Petitions for endowments—Counter-petitions by dissenters—"Scottish Central Board" formed—Activity of the Board—United Associate Synod petition against endowments—Send a deputation to London—"Case of dissenters" prepared by deputation—Sent to members of Parliament—Royal commission appointed—Appointment not agreeable to churchmen nor dissenters—Condemnatory resolution by Commission of Assembly—Resolution respecting instructions to Commissioners—Resolutions by United Associate Synod—Lord John Russell's letter to United Associate Synod—Extraordinary meeting of Synod—Agree to send a second deputation to London—Great meeting in London—Deputation visit towns in England—Proposed plan of ministers with regard to endowments—Plan condemned by General Assembly—Plan not carried into effect—Charges against dissenters by church-extensionists—Dissenters vindicated—Views of United Secession Church concerning Establishments—Results of Voluntary church controversy—Concluding remarks.

In this chapter I propose giving some account of a controversy which is at present exciting a high degree of attention in this country, and in which the Secession Church has acted, and is still acting, a prominent and decided part. The controversy to which I refer, is that which has been carrying on for several years, with regard to the connexion between Church and State; or, as it is most frequently termed, the *Voluntary-church controversy*. It had but a small beginning. When it first arose, it appeared like the cloud which the prophet's servant, on Mount Carmel, beheld rising out of the sea, no bigger than a man's hand. Many professed to regard it with a feeling of contempt; and anticipated that it would speedily pass away. But it has increased and spread to such a degree, that the whole heavens have now become covered with its porten-

tous gloom. There is not a town, probably not a village in Scotland, where the sound of this controversy has not been heard. It is undergoing a thorough discussion from the pulpit, the press, and the public. While it has become the almost daily topic of household conversation among the Scottish peasantry and mechanics, it is making its way with irresistible force even among the uneducated masses of England. Almost all the churches in this country are ranging themselves openly and firmly either on the one side or the other. The question, which this controversy involves in it, has become the subject of grave deliberation in the cabinet. It has, to a great extent, the fate of parliamentary and municipal elections; and the whole of society, civil and ecclesiastical, has begun to heave, from its deepest foundations, with convulsive energy.

One of the most popular and enthusiastic (I cannot say most convincing) writers, in defence of national establishments of religion, expresses himself in very contemptuous language, concerning this great question; when characterizing the controversy at present carrying on, he stigmatizes one of his eloquent declamations, as "the wretched parody of the present day."\* Such language as this, is a present instance, exceedingly misapplied. However true it may be to express the contempt which the writer feels for the talents, and conduct, and motives of those who are opposed to him on this question, it by no means justifies the description of the controversy itself. In every view in which it can be contemplated, the controversy is of no ordinary importance. The question, which it is not only furnishes a fair and legitimate subject of discussion itself, but is intimately connected with the civil and religious prosperity of our country.

The question presents itself in two different aspects of which are highly important. One of these aspects is political or national. Viewed in this light, the point to be determined is, what is the cheapest, speediest, and most efficient mode of instructing the various classes of the community in the knowledge of Christianity, and thereby rendering them individually good members of society? Is it by means of a class of teachers, supported by the funds of the state, and favoured with the enjoyment of exclusive privileges? Or by leaving Christianity to make its way by means of free and unfettered energies, amongst the different sections of the community, without any special patronage or sup-

\* Lectures on the Establishment and Extension of National Education. By Thomas Chalmers, D.D., LL.D. P. 45.

the part of those in power, except protection extended equally and impartially to all? In determining such a point as this, every member of the community is entitled both to form and to express a judgment. And should the sentiments of any individual differ from those which, for the time, may have the ascendancy, it is unreasonable to subject him to abuse for giving utterance to them, so long as he does so in a calm and Christian manner.

But there are other points, of at least equal importance, with the one now mentioned, involved in the political view of the question; such as, Is it competent for the civil magistrate to interfere (in his magisterial character) in matters of religion at all? Ought he to have the power of determining what particular form of a religious profession shall be embraced by the community over which he bears rule? Or, must every individual member of the community have the power of determining this for himself? Can he select and endow any particular denomination, without being guilty of injustice to those who do not belong to the favoured sect, and without destroying that equality of privilege which every good citizen is entitled to enjoy? These are points which not only deserve, but demand, consideration; and those persons who give them a calm and dispassionate discussion, render essential service to the cause of Christianity. When they spend their time and their talents in endeavouring to convey to their fellow-men correct notions on such points, they are labouring to promote the best interests of their species.

Another of the aspects, in which the question presents itself, is the religious or scriptural view of it. Viewed in this light, the point to be determined is, what is the particular rule laid down in the word of God, which we are required to follow, in propagating and maintaining Christianity? Has the Author of the gospel left it to the judgment of men, to adopt such means as to them may seem fittest for introducing and upholding in any country the Christian institutions? Or, has he issued an authoritative law upon the subject, and prohibited men from employing any other means, in Christianizing the world, than those which he has been pleased to prescribe? If there be a portion of the community, who, after mature deliberation, have adopted this latter view of the question, and who feel themselves called upon, by an imperative sense of duty, to maintain it in the face of all opposition, and to inculcate it upon their fellow-men with the view of producing conviction in their mind, is there any thing wrong or disgraceful in such conduct? Ought they, when they bring the subject to be tried by the tests of reason and of Scripture, to be treated with contumely and contempt, merely because they venture to express

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spoken on one side of the question,  
along with "papists and infidels," as

equally opposed to purity of doctrine as the former of these classes, and equally desirous to subvert Christianity as the latter? What can be the meaning of the incessant repetition of this obnoxious classification, if it be not for the purpose of holding up voluntary church-men to the odium of the country, by representing them as engaged, along with these two classes, in a destructive crusade against the protestant faith, and against the Christian religion? This mode of conducting the controversy is unfair; it is altogether unworthy of enlightened and honourable men. It is a mean and ungenerous attempt to demolish an adversary, not by argument, but by an appeal to ignorance and prejudice.

I know of no connexion which the present controversy necessarily has either with popery or infidelity. What the supporters of voluntary churches plead for, is that Christianity shall be left to maintain and propagate itself in the world, through the medium of the unconstrained exertions of those who believe it, accompanied by the gracious influences of the Holy Spirit; exactly in the same way as it did, during the first three centuries, before any civil establishment of religion existed. This is what is meant by the separation of church and state, which they are desirous to accomplish. This is what is meant, in common language, by "the destruction of the Establishment." It is not the destruction of the protestant faith, much less the subversion of Christianity; but it is dissolving the connexion which at present exists, in this and other countries, between the state and the Christian religion; so that the latter, instead of being upheld and propagated by means of legislative enactments, shall be left entirely free from all state interference. This is the very marrow, the sum and substance of the question (whatever subordinate points may be connected with it), which is at present undergoing a searching investigation before the tribunal of the public. I ask, what connexion has this question with popery or infidelity, so that voluntaries should be almost uniformly classed with papists and infidels? I repeat, that it has no necessary connexion either with the one or with the other. It is possible that papists and infidels may approve of dissolving the connexion between church and state, and may plead for the dissolution. They have exactly the same right to do so, that any other class of the community have. But it is at least equally possible, that they may be opposed to the dissolving of the connexion; and I believe that, in point of fact, a much greater number of papists and infidels will be found approving of the connexion than opposed to it. I should not, however, on that account think myself warranted in identifying the supporters of Establishments with papists and infidels, as if there was a

necessary connexion between the former and the latter. It can be regarded, then, in no other light than a species of calumny, to place voluntaries in the same category with papists and infidels. There would be as much truth, and equal propriety, in classing them with Mohammedans and Hindoos.

The misrepresentations which have called forth these remarks, have not been confined to the obscure columns of newspapers, or to the ephemeral speeches of platform orators. They have been authoritatively delivered, as if they were the very gospel, from the professorial chair. They have been reiterated, in a variety of figures of speech, by one of the most distinguished ministers of the Established Church, in lectures which he has delivered to admiring audiences, both in the northern and the southern metropolis; and which, being lately published in a cheap form, have been scattered in thousands over the land. This writer styles the attempt which is now making to dissolve the connexion between the church and the state, "a machine-breaking reformation;" and he sneeringly calls the persons who are engaged in making this attempt, "the machine-breaking reformers of the present day," who, in the exuberance of his charity, he avers are "far more mischievous in their higher walk, but hardly more intelligent, be they in or out of parliament, than the machine-breakers of Kent, the frame-breakers of Leicestershire, or the incendiaries of a few years back, in the southern and midland counties of England." He further says of these "machine-breaking reformers,"—"They would suppress parishes, or, by at least a partial destruction, keep back the water of life from certain parts of the territory." He adds, "The days were, when 'a man was famous, according as he had lifted up axes upon the thick trees, or according as he gave of materials or money for the building and the endowment of churches. But now they would break down the carved work thereof at once with axes and hammers. They have said in their hearts, Let us destroy them together: they would burn up all the synagogues of God in the land.'" As if this language were not sufficient to fix the stamp of reprobation on the "machine-breaking reformers," he speaks of them in still plainer and stronger terms, when he describes them as "those impetuous and bustling agitators, in whose breasts politics have engrossed the place of piety, resolved at all hazards upon change, and prepared to welcome, with shouts of exultation, the overthrow of those altars which, in holier and better times, upheld the faith and devotion of our forefathers."\* It is impossible to read,

\* Lectures on the Establishment and Extension of National Churches. By the Rev. Dr. Chalmers. Pp. 11, 13, 14.

without a feeling of indignation, such reckless and inflammatory, as well as unfounded, language applied to good men, who (admitting that they may be mistaken with regard to the mode by which they endeavour to accomplish their object), instead of aiming at the subversion of religion, or seeking to overturn any one altar that has been erected in honour of Christ, are labouring to extend his kingdom, and to diffuse amongst their fellow-men, correct notions of its spirituality and its power.

While I have thus animadverted on the attempts that have been made to prejudice the public mind against the advocates of voluntary churches, by misrepresenting the object which they have in view, and by imputing to them designs which they disown, a regard to truth obliges me to admit, on the other hand, that abusive language has, in too many instances, been employed, in the course of this controversy, concerning those who have considered it their duty to declare themselves in favour of national establishments of religion. Language of this description is altogether unbecoming such an important discussion as that which is now under review. The use of it can have no other effect, than that of irritating the persons to whom it is applied. It ought not to be doubted, that there is a large class in our country, containing in it many men of great worth, and of high religious and literary attainments, who are conscientiously attached to national establishments of religion, firmly believing that they are necessary to the comfortable maintenance, and the successful propagation, of Christianity. Let those who differ from them on this point, endeavour to reach conviction to their mind, by every rational and scriptural argument; but let them carefully avoid all approach to scurrility or abuse. The battle must be fought, and the victory won, by making use of better-tempered and more efficient weapons than these.

The question concerning ecclesiastical establishments is not new in this country. It has frequently been made the subject of discussion. Opposite views of it have been maintained by men distinguished for their talents and their learning. I am not aware, however, that it has ever occupied such a prominent place in the public mind, or excited such an extraordinary ferment among all classes, as it is doing at the present moment. It is not my intention to go farther back, in the review of this question, than the commencement of the voluntary church controversy, which is now agitating the empire.

The publication of a sermon, in May 1829, by Mr. Andrew Marshall, minister of the United Secession Church in Kirkintilloch, may be considered as the commencement of

this controversy.\* This sermon was preached by him, in Greyfriars Church, Glasgow, on the evening of Thursday, the 9th of April, before "The Glasgow Association for propagating the gospel in connexion with the United Secession Church," and was immediately given to the public, under the title of *Ecclesiastical Establishments considered*. The text of it is, Psalm lxxiv. 20, "Have respect unto the covenant, for the dark places of the earth are full of the habitations of cruelty;" and the discourse itself consists of a series of propositions, briefly but forcibly illustrated, the object of which is to show, that religious establishments are unscriptural, unjust, impolitic, secularizing in their tendency, inefficient, and unnecessary. As the sermon, when preached, rivetted the attention of the audience; so, when published, it produced an instantaneous and powerful impression. So eager and extensive were the demands for it, that it passed, in rapid succession, through several editions. The public mind was in a state highly favourable for receiving such a publication. The discussions concerning the Catholic Relief Bill, which had newly been passed, had produced a high degree of political excitement. Some were rejoicing in the progress which liberal principles were making in high places; others were trembling lest, owing to the admission of Roman Catholics into parliament, popery would again acquire an ascendancy. In the "Advertisement" prefixed to his sermon, Mr. Marshall stated it to be probable, that the Roman Catholics, having obtained emancipation, might ere long claim a civil establishment in Ireland; and he did not see how, on the principles of those who vindicate establishments, such a claim could well be refused. He called upon protestants to consider how such an evil as this might be prevented; and he declared, that the only effectual security against it was to be found in the principles advocated in his discourse. "Adopt," said he, "these principles, and the ambition of popery is at an end; its efforts are paralyzed, its hopes are cut off, and, viewed as a religious system, it must quickly become of all others the least considerable, because of all others it has the least support from reason or from Scripture." And he added, "That these principles might be before the eye of his countrymen, in the event of such a crisis occurring, as he has supposed, is the main reason that has induced the author to allow this discourse, with all its imperfections, to come before the public."

\* I am aware, that the Rev. J. Ballantyne's (of Stonehaven) "Comparison of Established and Dissenting Churches," was published some short while before this. But Mr. Ballantyne's book, at its first publication, produced little or no impression.

Mr. Marshall's sermon was allowed to circulate during the summer, and do its work among the people, producing conviction in the minds of multitudes, who had never before thought upon the subject, without any attempt at a reply, on the part of the friends of the Establishment. At length, in the month of August, a long and elaborately-written review of it appeared in the *Edinburgh Christian Instructor*. This article was written with considerable spirit and plausibility; and the appearance of it gladdened the hearts of the adherents of the national church. It was speedily extracted from the periodical in which it originally appeared, published in the form of a pamphlet, and put into circulation, as an antidote to Mr. Marshall's anti-establishment doctrines. The writer of the review professed to anticipate a very different result, from the passing of the Catholic Relief Bill, from that which Mr. Marshall affirmed to be probable. "What," said the reviewer, "if instead of the precursor to hostility, we hail it as the star of peace rising upon our country, after a long and troubled night of anarchy and debate? What if we see in it popery extinguishing her last fires, and obtaining a more pre-eminent station, only that she might decently expire? If these be our sentiments,—and they are the sentiments of at least one-half of the community,—with what propriety can we be called upon to accede to this writer's conclusion?"\* And, on the supposition that Mr. Marshall's prediction was likely to be realized, the reviewer pronounced the remedy prescribed (the abolishing of establishments) to be worse than the disease. "What," said he, "is the amount of his (Mr. Marshall's) advice? It is to pull our house down with our own hands, and to enact ourselves the tragedy which is already preparing in the rehearsal. Nay, it is to put the instruments of destruction into the hands of our enemies, and to erect the stage for our own tragic end. For we are persuaded, that if popery shall ever triumph in this country, and again 'lift her mitred head in courts and parliaments,' it shall have been when the overthrow of our protestant establishments has opened the way for her triumphal procession, when catholicism united is opposed to protestantism without a head, when she lies at the mercy of her enemies,—

———' ingens littore truncus,  
Avulsunque humeris caput et sine nomine corpus.' "†

A few months after the review appeared, Mr. Marshall published a large pamphlet, in the form of "A Letter to the

\* Review of Mr. Marshall's Sermon, p. 18.

† Ibid. p. 19.

Rev. Andrew Thomson, D.D.," \* in which he discussed the subject of ecclesiastical establishments at much greater length than he had done in his sermon. His object in presenting himself to public notice a second time, he declared, was not solely, nor even chiefly, the answering of the review. "I would enter," said he, "on a somewhat wider field; I would perform a more important service to the great cause of truth and reason. Unequal as I may be to the task, I would examine the more essential points of difference between those called churchmen and those called dissenters,—would expose the iniquity, as well as the folly, of all human usurpation in matters of religion,—and would exhibit in its true colours, that system of antichristianism, which has laboured so long, and with so much success, to destroy the distinction between the world and the church, and to forge chains for the understandings and the consciences of men."† In this publication, Mr. Marshall, in a style peculiarly his own—clear, pointed, and energetic—considered the two great branches of argument, in favour of religious establishments, drawn from Scripture and expediency; and it will be difficult to find, in any production, a train of reasoning more logically conclusive than that which he pursues from beginning to end of his triumphant "Letter." The effect produced by this publication, was to widen and deepen, to a great extent, the current of opinion, which had set in strongly in favour of voluntary churches.

The reviewer did not leave Mr. Marshall in undisturbed possession of the field. He published a "Defence of Ecclesiastical Establishments," in reply to Mr. Marshall's "Letter." This pamphlet is chiefly occupied with a discussion of the two following questions: "*First*, Does Scripture authorize governments to contribute to the support and spread of religion? and, *secondly*, Are such contributions necessary for the maintenance of religion?" The author, of course, endeavoured to show, that to both of these questions an affirmative answer must be given. He took up the arguments which Mr. Marshall had previously discussed, and attempted to rebut, one by one, the conclusions which he had established. It is possible that the reviewer's reasoning may prove satisfactory to those who are already convinced that ecclesiastical establishments are both scriptural and expedient; but it does not appear at all fitted to produce conviction in the mind of an opponent, or even to satisfy the inquiries of a neutral person, who has not yet formed a decided opinion on either side of the question. Placed beside Mr. Marshall's "Letter," the reasoning of the "Defence" is pointless and inconclusive.

\* Dr. Thomson was Editor of the Edinburgh Christian Instructor.

† Letter to the Rev. A. Thomson, D.D., p. 7.

During the year 1831, a volume entitled *Ecclesiastical Establishments farther considered*, appeared from the fertile and energetic pen of Mr. Marshall. The controversy was now beginning to assume a more decided and determined shape. The sphere of it was also widening. Newspapers and religious periodicals were throwing open their columns to the combatants, on the one side or the other. A strong impression had been produced, both amongst the common people and also amongst men of education, by the discussion which had already taken place. Mr. Marshall perceived the vast importance, not merely of keeping up, but of deepening, the interest which had been excited among all classes, on this engrossing subject. He considered that, in the present peculiarly favourable state of the public mind, it would be wrong "for the friends of religion and of human liberty, to let the discussion respecting church establishments die away, or even to let it languish for any length of time." "Who," said he in his Introduction, "that has the smallest tincture either of patriotism or of religion, of regard for the interests of Christianity or for the interests of his fellow-men, would not wish to see it prolonged, and prolonged with increasing spirit? A change must come; evils of such enormous magnitude cannot always exist; the sanctuary of the Lord must be cleansed; his holy mountain must be freed from what is so much calculated to hurt and to destroy. Are not symptoms of the happy era beginning to appear? Is not the night far spent, and the day at hand? Is not the fabric, which has so long encumbered and oppressed the world, now tottering to its fall? Are not wise and good men, throughout our country and throughout the globe, longing to see it laid in the dust? Are not the nervous alarm, the frantic rage, the imbecile malignity of those who labour to uphold it, proclaiming aloud their own secret conviction of the hopelessness of their efforts? And who, in such circumstances, would withhold his hand from it? Who that has but the opportunity, not to speak of any more special call, would not deem himself bound to lend it a thrust that may help it down?"\*

Under such impressions as these, of the importance of the controversy, Mr. Marshall penned his *Ecclesiastical Establishments farther considered*; and the design which he had in view, in the publication of this volume, he stated in the following terms:—"My purpose, in the following pages, is to give a cursory view of the controversy as it at present exists, chiefly to the north of the Tweed, vindicating the statements in my Sermon, and in my Letter to Dr. Thomson, from the

sophistry and misrepresentation of some writers who have appeared on the other side ; and exhibiting, if not the whole of the argument, which is considerably various, yet the more material points of it, in a form as condensed and as perspicuous as possible ; that any objection which may have been started may be removed ; that any dust which may have been raised may be cleared away ; that the less informed part of the community may be instructed ; that the wavering, if there be any in that predicament, may be confirmed ; that the gainsayers may be silenced, or put to shame ; and that all who have not made up their minds on the subject, may be enabled to do so without difficulty, and on irrefragable grounds." Those who have perused with attention, and without prejudice, this volume, will admit, that it discovers, on the part of the author, an intimate knowledge of the various branches of the subject which he undertakes to discuss ; that it is written with great perspicuity and fairness ; that the argument, throughout, is conducted with consummate skill ; and that the writer, on account of the ability which he displays, is entitled to rank in the very foremost class of controversialists.

But whatever opinion may be formed of the merits of Mr. Marshall's publications on the subject of ecclesiastical establishments, the fact is incontrovertible, that these publications produced a powerful impression on a large portion of the community, connected both with the national church, and also with the various bodies of dissenters. If religious establishments in this country are in a much more tottering condition than they formerly were, to Mr. Marshall must be awarded the honour or the blame (according to the particular view which individuals may be inclined to take of the subject) of having struck the first effectual blow. His talented productions produced a twofold effect : they diffused light, and inspired energy.

With the view of diffusing information on the subject of voluntary churches, and keeping alive the interest which had already been excited, as well as giving a proper direction to the current of public opinion, it was considered desirable by some, that an association should be formed. Some of those ministers, who were friendly to the principles which Mr. Marshall had so successfully inculcated in his publications, met together, for the purpose of consultation ; when it was resolved to take steps for accomplishing this object.

A meeting was called by a circular addressed to a number of gentlemen, in the following terms :—

" SIR,—At last meeting of the United Associate synod, a number of its ministers had a friendly consultation respecting the best means of promoting the voluntary support of the gospel. All present were of opinion, that an

Association, embracing evangelical dissenters from different denominations, might do much, by publications and otherwise, to secure this object, and to obtain for voluntary churches a redress of their grievances. To further these views, a committee was appointed, consisting of the Rev. Dr. Brown, Broughton Place; the Rev. John M'Gilchrist, Rose Street, Edinburgh; the Rev. William Laurie, Lauder; and the Rev. David King, Dalkeith. Mr. M'Gilchrist to be convener.

"By agreement of this committee, you are invited to breakfast in the Royal Hotel (Gibb's), Prince's Street, Edinburgh, at 10 o'clock, on Tuesday the 24th inst., when the dissenting ministers and laymen present shall advise concerning the constitution of the intended Society, and its plan of operations.

"JOHN M'GILCHRIST, Convener.

"*Edinburgh, January 2d, 1832.*"

This meeting took place, agreeably to the notice given, on the 24th of January, in the Royal Hotel, when it was unanimously resolved, "That a society should be formed, having for its object the asserting and maintaining the rights of voluntary churches." A committee was appointed to draw up rules and to report to another meeting.

On the 13th of September, 1832, a large assemblage of the friends of voluntary church principles, convened by circular, met in the Royal Saloon, Edinburgh. The meeting consisted of ministers and laymen belonging to various denominations of evangelical dissenters; and the Rev. Dr. Peddie occupied the chair. Mr. M'Gilchrist, as convener of the committee formerly appointed, reported their proceedings, and read the rules which they had prepared.

The following resolution was moved by Andrew Coventry Dick, Esq., seconded by the Rev. Dr. Brown, and unanimously adopted:—"That this meeting approve of the report of the committee now read, and that the gentlemen present do now, agreeably thereto, form themselves into a Society, by the name of THE VOLUNTARY CHURCH ASSOCIATION, and adopt the fundamental principles and rules recommended in said report, as the fundamental principles and rules of said Society." The fundamental principles referred to in this resolution, are the following:—"That a compulsory support of religious institutions is inconsistent with the nature of religion, the spirit of the gospel, the express appointment of Jesus Christ, and the civil rights of men: That, in every case where the individual disapproves of the system supported, or of the principle of its support, it is an unwarrantable attack on the right of property, and a direct invasion of the rights of conscience: That it keeps in a state of unnatural separation, those who ought to be united, and in a state of unnatural union, those who ought to be separate: That its tendency, as exhibited in its effects, is to secularize religion, promote hypocrisy, perpetuate error, produce infidelity, destroy the unity and purity of the church, and disturb the peace and order of civil society: That, by its direct and

indirect influence, it is among the principal causes of the low state of Christianity in those countries where it is professed, and of the slowness of its progress throughout the world ; and that, while thus unreasonable, impolitic, unjust, and mischievous, it has not even the plea of necessity, Christianity having within itself, in the native influence of its doctrines on the minds of those who believe them, every thing which is requisite for its efficient support and indefinite extension."

These were the fundamental principles of the Association that was now formed. Mr. Dick, in a long and eloquent speech \* which he delivered in support of the above resolution, referring to the principles on which the society was founded, said, " These will show, that if we are hostile to Establishments, it is not for few, or slight, or ill-considered reasons ; that our opinions have been formed after a wide and deliberate inquiry ; and that we have founded our Association on a broad and varied basis of truth. We unite in different characters. We unite as citizens, to accuse Establishments of being unjust and oppressive, adverse to civil freedom and an equitable distribution of political power ; as lovers of good government, to declare that they have been the fertile sources of perplexity and toil to statesmen, and to subjects, of uneasiness, jealousy, and strife ; as men of sense and reason, to expose their inconsistency with the nature of human society, which is ever advancing, while they are immutable, and claim to be perfect, and are therefore hostile to new developments of truth, lest their imperfections should be detected, and their authority weakened. But above all, we have united as *Christians*, to teach our countrymen that Church Establishments are at variance with the spirit of our religion ; with its express appointments ; with the example of its early history ; that they have corrupted the church, retarded its progress, and tarnished its reputation. Here it is that we take our chief stand, and a union upon such grounds we feel to be most wise and necessary ; for indeed, no class of men has equal cause with Christians to oppose Establishments ; none has suffered so much by their existence, and none will be so much benefited by their downfall." †

It was resolved by the meeting, before they separated, that their committee be instructed, " as early as convenient, to call a public meeting of all persons friendly to the support of the gospel by voluntary contributions ; to announce the formation of the society, and make known the principles on which it is founded, and the objects it has in view."

\* The substance of this speech was afterwards published in a small pamphlet.

† Speech, p. 7.

The example set by the meeting, whose proceedings have now been detailed, was speedily followed in other parts of the country. On the 12th of November, the same year, a numerous public meeting was held in Gordon-street Church, Glasgow, at which the Rev. Dr. Dick presided, when a similar association was formed. Kindred institutions were organized not only in the principal towns of Scotland, but also in many of the rural districts. The flame spread to the North of England, where several voluntary church associations sprung into existence. On the 29th January, 1833, the association formed in Edinburgh had a very crowded public meeting, at which the principles of the society were announced and vindicated. The committee connected with the society in Glasgow projected and commenced a cheap periodical, bearing the title of the *Voluntary Church Magazine*, the pages of which were designed to be wholly devoted to the maintenance of those principles on which these associations are formed.\*

The Voluntary church question found its way into the British House of Commons. Mr. George Faithful, M. P. for Brighton, moved, on the 16th of April, 1833, the following resolution:—"That the Church of England, as by law established, is not recommended by practical utility; that its revenues have always been subject to legislative enactments; and that the greater part, if not the whole, of those revenues ought to be appropriated to the relief of the nation." This resolution Mr. Faithful supported by a long and honest speech. After a short discussion, his motion was negatived without a division. It was not to be supposed, that such a question could be favourably entertained by the members of the House of Commons; seeing that the adopting of the resolution involved in it a great organic change in the British constitution. The bringing forward of this motion, in the circumstances of the case, was considered by many to be altogether premature. The only good that could result from the discussion of it, was, that it afforded an opportunity of bringing before the minds of members of parliament homely truths, on an important subject, to which they might probably not think it worth their while to attend, if presented to them in any other form.

The friends of Establishments had good reason to be alarmed by the rapid and extensive diffusion of voluntary church

\* This Magazine, humble though its form be, has from its commencement occupied a highly respectable place among the periodicals of the day, for talent, and energy, and variety. On account of the extent of its circulation, and the general respectability of its papers (though probably sometimes a little too fiery), it has proved a most efficient organ for the maintenance and propagation of voluntary church principles.

principles. At first they maintained rather a dignified silence. With the exception of the anonymous reviewer whose lucubrations have been already noticed, no one ventured for some time to put forth even a solitary pamphlet in defence of Establishments. The dignitaries of the national church seemed either to be looking on with silent contempt, or to be flattering themselves with the hope that the storm would speedily blow past. It was not until they beheld voluntary church associations springing up, in both town and country, that they began in good earnest to bestir themselves. A numerous meeting of the friends of the Established Church, both ministers and laymen, was held at Glasgow on the 31st January, and 1st February, 1833, when it was resolved to form an "Association for promoting the interests of the Church of Scotland." So great was the zeal displayed on this occasion, that it was considered necessary to spend two days in delivering speeches, which were occupied chiefly with the praises of the national Zion, and with philippics against the advocates of the voluntary principle. Similar associations were formed in other parts of the country. A periodical was, at the same time, commenced in Glasgow, under the title of the *Church of Scotland Magazine*, avowedly for the defence of the Establishment.\* Pamphlets also were multiplied on the same side of the question, some of which were sufficiently abusive; and the contest waxed hotter and hotter, until it raged furiously not only in the large towns, but also in the most sequestered districts of the country. Religious societies, where churchmen and dissenters had long co-operated harmoniously together, were broken up, as the former refused any longer to associate with the latter; and, in many instances, the ties of friendship were broken asunder by means of the controversy.

Amongst the number of those writers who took up the pen, at this crisis, to defend the cause of church establishments, by far the ablest and most effective, was Dr. John Inglis, one of the ministers of Edinburgh. He published, in 1833, a *Vindication of Ecclesiastical Establishments*, in which he reviewed, and endeavoured to confirm, the arguments which are drawn from Scripture and expediency in favour of national establishments of religion, and attempted to obviate the objections which have been advanced against them. From the frequent references which he makes to the publications of Mr.

\* I have lately observed a notice in one of the newspapers, that this periodical has run its course, and become extinct. This must be a matter of congratulation to the Church of Scotland, whose professed advocate this magazine was; seeing that it was one of those dangerous auxiliaries, whose reckless violence does positive injury to the cause which they are anxious to support.

Marshall and Mr. Ballantyne, he appears, in penning his volume, to have had his eye chiefly fixed on the writings of these individuals. His *Vindication* is characterized by perspicuity and candour. The pervading tone of it, is that of calm, dispassionate reasoning; and it is honourably free from all personal abuse of his opponents. As a clear and able statement of the arguments in favour of religious establishments, it is fairly entitled to take the lead of all the publications which have been called forth, by the present controversy, on that side of the question. If the author has failed in conveying conviction to the mind, this is to be attributed more to the inherent weakness of the cause, which he has undertaken to defend, than to any want of tact or ingenuity in the mode of conducting his vindication.

At the commencement of the controversy, Mr. Marshall had complained that no antagonist worthy of his notice had met him on the field, that he had been assailed by unknown individuals who fought under the covert of a mask; and he had expressed a wish, that some one would come forth to the combat, with whom he might esteem it an honour to contend. His wish was now gratified by the publication of Dr. Inglis' book. A more distinguished, or a more honourable champion, than the one who now made his appearance, the national church was not able to produce. Mr. Marshall accordingly girt himself anew for the combat. After a short interval, a volume appeared from his pen in reply to Dr. Inglis. This new publication consisted of a series of letters addressed to that respected individual. While Mr. Marshall's book was passing through the press, Dr. Inglis died; and when the Reply was published, there was a degree of awkwardness in the form in which it was presented to the public, it being that of a direct address to a person who was no longer among the living. This circumstance, however, did not affect the merits of the volume. The cause, which Dr. Inglis had vindicated, was not the cause of an individual, but of a party; and Mr. Marshall, in addressing to him the letters which constituted his Reply, dealt with him in this capacity. In these letters, Mr. Marshall followed the track which the Doctor had pursued in his book, combating with great ability his arguments, exposing his fallacies, and pointing out anew the unscriptural nature, the injustice, and impolicy of all religious establishments. Mr. Marshall brought forward, in his Reply, a variety of additional facts and illustrations, which were not in any of his former publications; and by the successful manner in which he executed his task, he fully sustained the well-earned reputation which he had already acquired.

Those who felt interested in the stability of the national

church had good reason to be alarmed at the progress which voluntary church sentiments were making among the mass of the people. The numerous publications that issued from the press, on this great question, in every possible variety of form, and the crowded public meetings that were held, in large towns and in country districts, for the discussion of it, produced an uncommon excitement; and, as the assailants of a vulnerable system have a much easier, and in general a much more popular task to accomplish, than the defenders of it, no doubt can be reasonably entertained that the result of these publications, and of these meetings, has been highly unfavourable to the cause of ecclesiastical establishments.

The proceedings of the General Assembly, these few years past, and the speeches that have been delivered in it, on the engrossing topics of the day, show the alarm which the agitation of the voluntary church question has produced in the bosom of all parties belonging to the national church. A degree of irresolution has marked their recent proceedings, which we search for in vain in the annals of those years (now gone by), when dissent, instead of demanding, with a clamorous voice, an equality of rights, was thankful to be permitted to exist. Those who have, for some time past, been guiding the councils of the supreme judicatory of the Church of Scotland, have felt themselves placed in an awkward and difficult predicament. On the one hand, the people demand a reform of their ecclesiastical institutions. On the other, the aristocracy wish things to continue as they are. While it is acknowledged that there is no small danger to the stability of the national church, in alienating from it either of these classes, it is also admitted that a difficulty of no ordinary kind presents itself in the attempt to reconcile the jarring wishes and interests of both. The making of such an attempt is perilous, as well as difficult; and the danger consists in this, that, while half measures are adopted for the purpose of pleasing both parties, neither will be satisfied.

It is such an experiment as this, that the preponderating party in the General Assembly have been making of late years; and it has been productive of the natural result. The people are more than grumbling; a large proportion of them are much dissatisfied with the conduct of their ecclesiastical rulers; while the aristocracy are highly offended. The proceedings of the *evangelical* or *popular* party (as it is termed), with regard to patronage and calls, have been strangely inconsistent with their professions of regard for the rights of the people. Since the commencement of the voluntary church controversy, the subject of patronage has been repeatedly discussed in the General Assembly. Motion after motion has been brought

forward with the view of inducing the Assembly to declare patronage a grievance, and to adopt measures for its removal. What has been the result? These motions have been uniformly rejected by overwhelming majorities; and (strange to say) these majorities have been produced by the popular party making common cause, on this subject, with their opponents belonging to the moderate side of the house. If it be allowable to form a judgment from the speeches that have been delivered, as oft as this question has been discussed, the fear of losing the favour of the aristocracy, and of alienating them from the church, appears to have had a considerable influence in leading the Assembly to reject, by such decided majorities, all those overtures that have been brought forward for the abolition of patronage. One striking feature in the discussions on this subject, has been the strong language which some of the leading men, belonging to what is called the popular side of the house, have made use of in denouncing popular election. One reverend doctor, distinguished for his eloquence, shuddered at the idea of the mass of the people being intrusted with the choice of their own ministers, on account of their excessive "gullibility," and on account of the influence which "parochial demagogues" are apt to exercise over them.\* Another doctor, while in the very act of proposing a resolution, affirming patronage to be a grievance, and calling upon the Assembly to consider the best means for abolishing it, declared, "he was not there to plead for popular election;" and he added, with a pious horror, "he believed that it (popular election) would prove a curse to the Church of Scotland;† while a learned Lord of Session congratulated the house on the strong demonstration of feeling which had been given on this point. He was glad to hear it "so plainly declared" by all the preceding speakers, that they did "not intend any thing like popular election."‡

But then, while patronage must not be abolished, on account of the dangerous consequences that would result from the abolition of it, an attempt must be made to please the people; and as they could not on account of their "gullibility," be safely intrusted with the power of *choosing* their ministers, the happy expedient was hit upon of giving them the power of quarrelling with their patrons, by rejecting (according to the fancy or caprice of the moment), the patron's presentee. This high privilege, the venerable Assembly conceived, was all that the good people of Scotland could be safely trust-

\* See report of Dr. Chalmers' speech on patronage question, in 1833.

† See report of Dr. W. Thomson's speech on this question in 1836.

‡ See report of Lord Moncrieff's speech, same debate.

ed with. Hence the birth of the celebrated Veto Act. This act was first submitted to the consideration of the General Assembly, in the form of an overture, at their meeting in 1834. It was brought forward and supported by the popular party, as a cure, or at least a mitigation of the evils of patronage; while it was opposed by the moderate party, as an infringement upon the civil rights of patrons,—as inconsistent with the fundamental principle of the presbyterian polity established in Scotland, and as a measure which could not be carried into operation, without the interposition of the legislature. After a keen discussion, it was carried by a majority of forty-six votes,\* that the overture be transmitted to presbyteries for their opinion; and it was agreed, without a vote, that it be converted into an interim act.

The following is the enactment of the General Assembly :  
 “ *Edinburgh, May 31, 1834.*—The General Assembly declare, that it is a fundamental law of this church, that no pastor shall be intruded on any congregation, contrary to the will of the people; and, in order that this principle may be carried into full effect, the General Assembly, with the consent of a majority of the presbyteries of this church, do declare, enact, and ordain, That it shall be an instruction to presbyteries, that if, at the moderating in a call to a vacant pastoral charge, the major part of the male heads of families, members of the vacant congregation, and in full communion with the church, shall disapprove of the person in whose favour the call is proposed to be moderated in, such disapproval shall be deemed sufficient ground for the presbytery rejecting such person, and that he shall be rejected accordingly, and due notice thereof forthwith given to all concerned; but that, if the major part of the said heads of families shall not disapprove of such person to be their pastor, the presbytery shall proceed with the settlement, according to the rules of the church: And farther declare, that no person shall be held to be entitled to disapprove as aforesaid, who shall refuse, if required, solemnly to declare, in presence of the presbytery, that he is actuated by no factious or malicious motive, but solely by a conscientious regard to the spiritual interests of himself or the congregation.”

This overture received the sanction of the majority of presbyteries, and is now the acknowledged law, according to which calls are moderated in the Church of Scotland. Along with the overture, a number of rules, prepared by a committee of Assembly, and designed to regulate the forms of procedure under this act, was also transmitted to presbyteries, and re-

\* The state of the vote was 184 *for*, and 138 *against* the overture.

ceived their sanction. These regulations, whatever might be the design of the Assembly in preparing them, tend greatly to restrict any little freedom which the act might be supposed to confer upon the people, and open a wide door for contention to all parties concerned. It is not the dissent of a majority of heads of families (being members) that are present on the day of moderation, but the dissent of a majority of persons standing on the roll, that can be sustained by the presbytery as a reason for not proceeding with the settlement. After an apparent majority of dissents have been lodged, the presbytery are to adjourn their proceedings till another meeting, to be held not less than ten days, nor more than fourteen, after the first. In the mean time, the presentee, if he desire it, or if the presbytery deem it expedient, is to have an opportunity of preaching to the congregation. At the second meeting of presbytery, no new dissents can be lodged, but any person who has previously dissented, may withdraw his dissent. If, at this meeting, it is found that there is still a majority of persons on the roll dissenting, it is competent to the patron, or the presentee, or to any member of presbytery, to require any or all of the persons so dissenting, to appear at a meeting of the presbytery, or of a committee of their number, to be held, within ten days at farthest, at some place within the parish, and then and there to declare that they are not actuated, in their opposition, by any factious or malicious motive, but solely by a conscientious regard to the spiritual interests of themselves or the congregation; and should any one of the dissentients fail to appear, or refuse to make the declaration required, his name is to be struck off from the list of persons dissenting. If, after this process has been gone through, a major part of persons standing on the roll is still found dissenting, the presentee is to be rejected by the presbytery; and the patron is to be required to give a presentation to another person, when exactly the same course of proceedings must be followed; and so on with regard to all the successive presentations that shall be given within the time (six months after the vacancy occurs) limited by law. If at the end of that period, it shall be found, in consequence of the squabbles that have taken place, or from any other cause, no presentation has been given to a person, from whose settlement a majority on the roll do not dissent, the *Jus Devolutum*, or the power of presenting, devolves upon the presbytery, and then the strife is at an end. Whether the person, whom the presbytery presents, shall be agreeable to the parishioners or not, all opposition must cease.\*

\* The following extract is taken from the account of the last General

Such is the Veto Act; and such are the regulations with which the operation of it is fettered. Though intended as a boon, it has been sulkily received by the people; while a large and influential portion of the Church of Scotland are decidedly opposed to it. The following passage, taken from the Report of the Anti-patronage Society for the year 1834, will show what is the opinion which the Directors of that Society entertained of the Veto Act. They anticipated not good, but evil from the passing of it. The description, which they give of the nature and tendency of it, is strikingly just.

“Those who conceive (say they) that the Act of Assembly, 1834, introducing a *veto* by the people on the patron’s nomination (which is something less than a call), restores their true rights, do greatly misconceive; inasmuch as it permits the establishment of the ministerial relation without any direct or expressed assent of the people, and restricts them to a simple right of refusal. The Directors are satisfied, that an arrangement of this character cannot come to good. It leaves untouched the bought and sold marketable right of patronage; it refuses to acknowledge the beautiful and Christian privilege of expressed assent by the people, as an act of theirs, to the nomination of their ministers; and it bestows upon them a right of contention, discord, and opposition; a privilege which, by its very nature and terms, can never come into active exercise, except in the shape of strife; and which, therefore, will soon probably cease to be either popular or available.

“By this law, a parish may be unanimous in desiring some one individual, or any one of ten or fifty individuals; but in this desire, they may be totally frustrated at the word of one person, the purchasing or inheriting owner of their patronage, who may be unconnected or unacquainted with them, or be of any or no character. They have no choice but of *his one nominee*, be he who he may; for while, it is true, they may reject his first, the only consequence is, that they will be de-

Assembly’s proceedings, given in the Christian Instructor for June 1838; from which it appears that some alterations have been made with regard to the above regulations:—“Mr. J. Shaw Stewart, who was appointed in room of Lord Moncreiff, convener of the committee ‘on calls,’ gave in a report containing certain proposed alterations in the regulations. In the first class of regulations, presbyteries were enjoined to hold a second meeting to afford opportunity for entering farther dissents, or withdrawing dissents, entered at the first meeting held for that purpose; and he had come to be of opinion, that the second meeting might, with advantage, be dispensed with, as it might lead to canvassing and caballing. In the third class of regulations, he proposed to provide that presentees nominated by presbyteries should be subject to the same regulations as were applicable to other presentees. The other alterations proposed were merely verbal, or otherwise unimportant. After some discussion on the proposed alterations, all of which were adopted,” &c.

volved on his second, or his third, or his fourth, or his any number, until his last shall be accepted by them. They can originate nobody. Their predicament is the unhappy one of *rejecting* the person chosen for them by another; they never can *choose*.

"Nor is this all. What has now been stated may be the issue where the parish has taken the trouble and paid the expense, and had the hardihood, to organize itself, so that a 'majority of the male communicants' shall be found to come forward against the patron. This, however, is the favourable alternative. According to human nature, and all past experience, the more likely thing to happen is, submission, coldness, indifference, secession, or abandonment of church altogether, rather than a strife with the influential head of the parish. And it would be no impeachment of these statements, if, for some time, none of them were realized. Patrons may perhaps act cautiously for a time, rather than all at once brave the consequences of an opposite course; but the time will come when these consequences will arise again, as a hundred years ago, under the like circumstances, they did arise."\*

One of the grounds, on which the Veto Act was opposed by Dr. Cook, by the Dean of Faculty (Mr. Hope), and other persons well acquainted with ecclesiastical law, was that it was an attempt "to impose practically a restriction amounting to a veto on the right of patronage;" and that it was wholly incompetent, and beyond the powers of the church to do so. It was predicted, that it would create "animosities, litigation, and injurious delays in the settlement of parishes;"—"that there would, as matters now stand, be a constant collision between the civil and ecclesiastical courts, the patron would assert his statutory right, and the civil court would, the law remaining as it is, be bound to confirm it."†

These predictions are in the course of receiving their fulfilment. Animosities have been excited in great abundance; litigation has commenced; injurious delays in the settlement of parishes have taken place; and the civil and ecclesiastical

\* The late learned Dr. M'Crie thought as meanly of the Veto Act, as did the Anti-patronage Directors. In a sermon, which he preached to his congregation on the Sabbath immediately after the Act was passed, and which was afterwards published, he adverted to the passing of the Act in the following terms:—"I say it is more than suspicious that the alleged boom should be presented by the hands of those who have summarily and haughtily thrown out the petitions of the Christian people against patronage. They say, they have muzzled the monster: It is a mistake; they have only muffled him, and they have muzzled the people."—*Volume of Sermons by Dr. M'Crie*, p. 346.

† A few plain Observations on the Enactment of the General Assembly, 1834. By George Cook, D.D. &c. P. 12.

courts are at present in a state of collision. It was not to be supposed that patrons would tamely submit to have their right of presentation virtually wrested from them by a power which they did not acknowledge. The Earl of Kinnoul, patron of the parish of Auchterarder, has accordingly brought the validity of the Veto Act to a trial before the supreme civil court in Scotland, and has obtained a judgment in his favour. A decided majority\* of the Lords of Session have declared, that Mr. Robert Young, the Earl's presentee to that parish, whom the General Assembly had laid aside, on the ground of his being vetoed by the majority of male communicants, has been legally, validly, and effectually presented; and they have ordered the presbytery of Auchterarder to take him on trial, and if found qualified, to receive and admit him according to law. They have also discharged the presbytery of Auchterarder from inducting any other person into that living. This decision has been affirmed by the House of Lords, who have found that the presbytery of Auchterarder, in refusing "to take trial" of Mr. Young's qualifications, have acted "illegally and in violation of their duty." In the meantime the General Assembly have passed resolutions asserting their independence, and stubbornly refuse to carry into effect the decisions which have been pronounced by the civil tribunals of the country.

In the case of the parish of Lethendy, the authority of the Court of Session has been set at open defiance, by the Commission of the Assembly giving instructions to the presbytery of Dunkeld to proceed with the settlement of Mr. Kessen, in the face of an interdict from that court. Mr. Clark, at whose instance the interdict was granted, had received a presentation from the Crown to that parish, and was rejected under the operation of the Veto Act. Another presentation was issued by the Crown, in favour of Mr. Kessen. But Mr. Clark still retained possession of his presentation, as the Crown, though it might grant another, could not recall the one already granted. He applied to the Court of Session for an interdict against the presbytery's sustaining the presentation of Mr. Kessen, which he obtained. The Commission instructed the presbytery to proceed, without regard to the *presentation*, upon the *call* alone, to the settlement of Mr. Kessen. Mr. Clark applied a second time to the Court of Session, and obtained a *supplemental interdict* against the induction of Mr. Kessen into the parish of Lethendy upon the *call*. In this new dilemma,

\* The majority consisted of the Lord President, the Lord Justice-Clerk, Lords Gillies, Meadowbank, Mackenzie, Medwin, Corehouse, and Cunningham, who gave their opinions *against* the validity of the Act. The minority consisted of Lords Glenlee, Fullerton, Moncreiff, Jeffrey, and Cockburn, who gave their opinions *in favour* of the Act.

the presbytery sought advice from the Commission ; and they were ordered to disregard the interdict, and to proceed with Mr. Kessen's settlement, according to the instructions which they had already received.\* This has been done ; and the presbytery have been solemnly rebuked at the bar of the Court of Session for presuming to ordain Mr. Kessen in opposition to the interdict which that Court pronounced. These are some of the fruits that have resulted from the operation of the Veto Act.

The General Assembly of 1834, besides originating the Act to which the attention of the reader has now been directed, has acquired notoriety on another account. It was this Assembly that commenced that system of agitation concerning church-extension and additional endowments, which has produced such a commotion in the country. Two committees were appointed ; one on Church Accommodation, and another on Endowments. The Rev. Dr. Chalmers was appointed convener of the former ; and Charles Ferguson, Esq., younger of Kilkerran, convener of the latter. A deputation proceeded, in the month of July, to London, to make known to his Majesty's government the destitution of the means of religious instruction that existed in Scotland, and to implore, in name of the national church, a grant of endowments to all the unendowed churches, which the Establishment had already built, or might afterwards erect, by the voluntary liberality of the people.

Many persons were at a loss to account for this new-born zeal, which had sprung up so unexpectedly and so vigorously in the Assembly. All who were acquainted with the past history of this ecclesiastical judicatory knew, that the general policy which it had pursued, was to discourage the erection of additional places of worship in connexion with the Establishment ; and that it was with great difficulty, and frequently after a protracted struggle, leave could be obtained to erect in some destitute situation even a single Chapel of Ease. To such an extent did this antipathy influence the decisions of that court, that when a proposal was made in 1818, to erect the English Chapel, in the Cowgate of Edinburgh, into a Chapel of Ease connected with the Church of Scotland, without the inhabitants being required to bear any part of the expense for the support either of the minister or house, it was rejected after a debate, by no less a majority than 98 to 32. It was also known that in many parts of the country, two or more small parishes had been united together, and places of worship had been either altogether suppressed, or permitted to

\* Present Position of the Church of Scotland ; A Letter to Dr. Cook. By James Bryce, D.D. P. 8.

remain empty, without any religious service being performed in them. All these things were matters of history, and those who were acquainted with them naturally enough asked the question, What is it that has so suddenly opened the eyes of the members of the General Assembly, in the year 1834, and made them see such a lamentable religious destitution prevailing both in town and country? What is it that has made them discern, apparently all at once, the existence of such a mass of heathenism, among the population of Scotland, and that has kindled in their bosoms such a flaming zeal to work out the regeneration of those unhappy beings whom they had so long neglected?

Leaving each to form an opinion for himself on these points, I proceed to notice a remarkable discovery which has been made by the leaders of the church-extension movement. This discovery relates to the rapid and extraordinary increase of dissenters. For a long period, it was generally admitted, both by those within and those without the pale of the Establishment, that the increase of dissenters, in this northern portion of the island, was owing to the existence of the law of patronage, to the sufferance of error in the national church, to the supineness and occasional immorality of her ministers, and to the course of mal-administration pursued by her ecclesiastical judicatories. To these causes were usually attributed the existence and increase of the Secession, the Relief, and of other dissenting societies. But since the commencement of the voluntary church controversy, it has been discovered, that the reason why dissenters have increased in such an extraordinary manner, is the want of accommodation in the parish-churches. Because the government has been so very lax, ever since the time of John Knox, as not to build churches in every square and lane of the cities, and in every little straggling village of the country, what could the neglected heathen of this island do, but become dissenters, and build churches for themselves? This is the melancholy discovery that has been made. If there had only been a sufficient number of churches, in which to accommodate the people, these dismal effects would have been prevented. The advocates of the voluntary church system have indeed attempted to show, that the want of churches cannot be the cause of the increase of dissenters, nor of the prevalence of heathenism at home; because a large proportion of the churches in the country are not nearly filled, and there are thousands of unlet and unoccupied seats in the churches of many of the large towns. The supporters of the church-extension scheme endeavour to silence their opponents on this point, by telling them, with great plainness and simplicity, that the existence of empty churches is no reason why

new ones should not be built ; because every Christian government is bound to build churches, wherever there is a population to fill them, whether the people choose to go to them or not.

The plan adopted by the Assembly's church-extension and endowment committees, for accomplishing the object of their appointment, was, raising a fund by voluntary subscription in the different parishes, for building churches, and soliciting government to grant endowments to the ministers that might be appointed to these churches. With regard to the first part of this plan, their exertions have been attended with a considerable degree of success ; and an encouraging instance has been given of what the voluntary principle is able to accomplish, even in circumstances not the most favourable for its operation. The last report of the church-extension committee presented to the General Assembly (in 1838), states, " that the total number of new churches erected during the last four years, is 187, and the total amount of money collected, £205,890." With regard to the other part of the plan, viz. the obtaining of endowments for the new churches, their exertions have hitherto been unsuccessful.

From a circular letter, subscribed by the moderator of the General Assembly (Dr. Patrick Macfarlane), and by the conveners of the two committees, and which was sent to the different parishes in January, 1835, it appears, that sanguine hopes were at first entertained, of obtaining endowments from the public treasury. In the commencing paragraph of this circular, the writers say,—“ The Assembly's sub-committee on church accommodation, have been corresponding with public and parliamentary men, on the means by which our church might be so extended as to meet the wants of our greatly increased population. The replies by which we have been honoured, are, without exception, highly favourable to our object ; but there is one opinion in which they all concur, and which we would feel it altogether out of place and of duty to withhold from you ; and that is, as to the great expediency of petitions, numerous and numerously signed, from all parts of the country ; and this for the purpose both of laying the wants of the people before the legislature, and of expressing the widespread attachment which prevails for the Establishment, among all classes of society in Scotland.”

No fewer than five different forms of a petition accompanied this letter, that the people might adopt one or other of them, according to the circumstances of the district. Great exertions were made to procure petitions from the various localities, and also to swell the number of petitioners to the greatest possible amount. The unexpected dismissal of Lord Melbourne's ministry, and the recall of Sir Robert Peel and of his party to

the cabinet, excited high hopes in the bosoms of the church-extendors. The King's speech, at the opening of the new parliament in February, 1835, was of a high-church complexion, and, among other things, contained a recommendation to grant money for building and endowing new churches in connexion with the Establishment of Scotland.

Meanwhile, dissenters were not idle. The petitions on the side of the national church were everywhere met by counter-petitions on the part of dissenters. In general, the petitions against endowments were more numerously signed than those which were presented in favour of them; and it deserves to be recorded, to the honour of liberal-minded churchmen, that many of them, in all parts of the country, though friendly to the principle of an Establishment, showed their disapprobation of the endowment scheme, and their regard for dissenters, by subscribing the petitions which dissenters presented against the granting of additional endowments.

Soon after the agitation commenced on the subject of church-extension, an active and powerful auxiliary to the dissenting interest sprung up in the "Scottish Central Board." This Board was formed at Edinburgh, on the 17th of December, 1834, "for extending the principle of voluntary churches, and vindicating the rights of dissenters." On all the public questions affecting the rights and privileges of dissenters, that have come before parliament since the formation of the Board, it has acted with a promptitude, and energy, and wisdom, which give it a strong claim on the gratitude and support of the various classes of evangelical dissenters in Scotland. When the Board understood that the Assembly's committee had formed a plan for procuring petitions to parliament, from all the parishes, in support of the church-extension scheme, and that they had put into circulation statistical tables, which were calculated to produce an erroneous impression, with regard to the want of church accommodation, they immediately procured from the various quarters, where a deficiency was alleged to exist, as authentic information as they could obtain, of the actual accommodation, both in the established and in dissenting churches. The information which they received, was published by them in a Statement, which was extensively circulated, and tended to open the eyes of many to the unjust and sectarian character of the General Assembly's scheme. The tables contained in this Statement showed, that the outcry which had been so loudly raised about the want of church accommodation, had in reality little or no foundation; that if the dissenting places of worship were to be taken into the account, as well as those belonging to the Establishment, so far from there being a want of accommodation, there was, in

many of the towns and country districts, an actual surplus. This difference of result exhibited in the Statement of the Board, from that which had been shown in the circular of the church-extension committee, is easily explained. The committee did not think it worth their while to mention in their circular, the church accommodation which dissenters had provided for themselves. They acted on the principle, that whatever may be the religious opinions of any portion of the community, accommodation connected with the Establishment ought to be provided out of the public funds for the whole population. The Board transmitted a copy of their Statement to every member of the House of Commons; and from a considerable number of them answers were received, declaring their determination to oppose any grant of the public money for the endowment of new churches.

The attention of the United Associate synod was called to this subject, at their meeting in April, 1835, and a resolution was adopted by them, to petition both houses of parliament against granting any farther endowments to the national church. It was also resolved to present a memorial to his Majesty's ministers on the subject of endowments, and to send a deputation to London, to enforce said memorial, and to watch over the progress of this business. The deputation whom the synod appointed on this errand, consisted of Messrs. David Young of Perth, and James Harper of Leith, ministers, and William Ellis, elder. Considerable hopes were entertained that the information which this deputation would be able to communicate to the members of government, and also to the liberal members of parliament, concerning the exact state of the endowment question in Scotland, would produce an impression highly favourable to the views of dissenters; the more especially as Sir Robert Peel and the high-church ministry, which had been formed under his auspices, had been obliged to resign, in consequence of a defeat on the Irish Church question, and had been succeeded by Lord Melbourne and his reform associates.

The synod's deputation proceeded to London, and discharged, in a very able and business-like manner, the important duty that was intrusted to them. They obtained an interview with the Premier, and with some of the leading members of government; they also waited upon many members of parliament connected with both sides of the house; and they communicated to all of these individuals much useful information concerning the great questions that were agitating the country. Besides these personal interviews, they made a liberal distribution of the synod's memorial, accompanied by a letter containing, in a condensed form, the strong points of

their case. This document I here insert entire, as it furnishes a clear, distinct, and compendious view of the grounds on which the claims of the Church of Scotland, for additional endowments, have been opposed by the Scottish dissenters. It is entitled, *Case for the dissenters of Scotland, respectfully submitted by the deputation from the United Associate synod appointed to communicate with his Majesty's ministers, &c.*

"So far as circumstances would permit, we have waited on members, and have found them in general favourable to our views; but as we cannot remain in town to complete this service, we avail ourselves of this mode of communication, in the hope that it may draw attention to the merits of our case. The synod which we represent, as is stated in our memorial, consists of three hundred and fifty congregations. The grounds on which we oppose the claim in question, and on which we confidently hope that parliament will sustain our opposition to it, are the following, namely—

"That although the measure to which we object is often represented as compassionately intended to provide for the poor, yet, as petitions for it show, it is in fact intended for the endowment of churches and chapels already existing, or to be erected for the rich and the poor alike; that to represent such a measure as needed for the poor of Scotland, is egregiously to mislead the legislature, for the instances in which they are excluded from places of worship, by want of room, or by inability to pay for sittings, are so rare, that to make them a matter of parliamentary consideration, is absolutely ridiculous; that what is claimed for the Church of Scotland is not a right, secured by existing statute, but a favour, for which the law, as it stands, makes no provision; that since, by the Act of Toleration for England, and by securities for Scotland, equally valid, the right of dissenters to avow and propagate their religious belief, is not only recognised, but established, and incorporated with the laws of the country, the legislature is bound to protect dissenters from injury or aggression; that the proposed measure is glaringly unjust, and deeply injurious, inasmuch as it would confer a new favour on one religious party, which is rich and endowed already, at the expense of another which is poor, unendowed, and contentedly supporting its own religious institutions; that this injustice is aggravated by the consideration, that dissenters in Scotland are not the few whose interest in a measure for the many it might be immaterial or impossible to consult, but in fact a numerous body, consisting of about 800 congregations, while the congregations of the Established Church do not greatly exceed 1,000; that although there were no injustice in the principle of the measure, yet the account given, by its promoters, of

the present state of church accommodation in Scotland, is (as has been proved by the 'Statement' of the Dissenters' Board in Edinburgh, copies of which have been sent to members of parliament) so grossly erroneous, that no legislative measure can in fairness be founded on it; that the measure involves a principle which, if extended to England and Ireland (and why sanction it at all, if it is not to be so extended?) would bring on the country an intolerable burden, to the injury of its peace and religious well-being; that the smallness of the sum which the Church of Scotland may submit to ask at present, is no mitigation of the measure, for although the sum may be small, the principle is great, and if the sum be small, so much the more shameful is it to force any portion of it, by legal compulsion, out of the pockets of dissenters, who not only support their own institutions, without asking any thing from the state, but are active in diffusing the gospel at home and abroad; that although dissenters in Scotland are united in opposing the measure, they are not alone in doing so, for many enlightened and respectable church-men have seen it their duty to oppose it along with them; that to grant the boon required, instead of doing good, would do much evil, by putting an arrest upon their benevolent exertions, by which alone, as we believe, the spiritual wants of Scotland can be suitably supplied; that we have no dislike to the Established Church in Scotland, viewed simply as a Christian community, and would rejoice to see her the instrument of reclaiming all that is unreclaimed; but we appeal to all that is reason and decency, whether compelling us to give of our substance, and thereby to cripple the resources of our own religious beneficence, for the extension of a church to which we do not belong, can promote the prosperity of that church; we believe that it never can, and therefore we ask the Church of Scotland, as she values her own prosperity, and is willing to do as she would be done by, to abstain from a deed of such flagrant injustice.

"Such are some of the grounds on which we rest a strong conviction, that the legislature will not grant the money prayed for, and ought not to do so. We ask no favour; the sum of our prayer is, let us alone, or give us that protection, as British dissenters, which common justice so obviously assigns to us."

On the 11th of June, 1835, Sir William Rae brought the subject of endowments for the Scottish Church, under the notice of the House of Commons, by moving, "That the petitions presented to the House, relative to the building and endowing of places of worship connected with the Established Church of Scotland, be referred to a select committee; and

that such committee shall inquire, and report how far the building and endowing of such places of worship is required for the moral and religious instruction of the lower orders of the people in Scotland." This motion was met by another from the Lord Advocate Murray, for an address to the Crown, to issue a commission "to inquire into the opportunities of religious worship, and the means of religious instruction afforded to the people of Scotland; as to the state of the law in regard to the building and repairing of churches; and also as to any funds which are now applicable to the purposes of the Established Church." The debate on this question was adjourned till the 1st of July, when Sir William Rae's motion and the Lord Advocate's amendment were withdrawn; and a resolution, proposed by Lord John Russell, was unanimously adopted, which was, that a royal commission be appointed by the Crown, "to inquire into the opportunities of religious worship, and means of religious instruction, and the pastoral superintendence afforded to the people of Scotland, and how far these are of avail for the moral and religious improvement of the poor and working classes; and, with this view, to obtain information respecting their stated attendance at places of worship, and their actual connexion with any religious denomination; to inquire what funds are now, or may hereafter be made available for the purposes of the Established Church of Scotland; and to report, from time to time, in order that such remedies may be applied to any existing evils, as parliament may think fit."\*

The appointment of a royal commission, for the purposes now stated, was not altogether agreeable either to the friends of the Establishment or to the dissenters. The former were averse to it, because they did not consider that there was any necessity for inquiry being made, and because they conceived that the proposal to inquire into the amount of church accommodation throughout the country, struck at the very principles on which religious establishments are founded. "If they were to act" (said Dr. Cook) "on the principle contended for by their enemies, it would just come to this, that it was a matter of no moment whether there was an Establishment at all. If the government was told that there was enough of religious accommodation, it was of no matter what kind, it would give

\* The commissioners appointed for the purposes specified in this motion were,—the Earl of Minto, G. C. B.; Hon. Mountstuart Elphinstone; John James Hope Johnstone, Esq. M. P.; Robert Bell, Esq. procurator of the Church of Scotland; James M. Nairne, Esq. of Dunsinnan; Thomas Henry Lister, Esq.; John Shaw Stuart, Esq.; John James Reid, Esq.; Andrew Coventry Dick, Esq.; Henry Baxter, Esq.; Edward Horsman, Esq.; and George Logan, Esq. secretary.

the enemies of the church an opportunity to alienate the affections of the people from her; and, if it came to this, it would soon follow as an argument, that there was no need for Establishments at all.”\*

The dissenters did not approve of the appointment of the royal commission, any more than did the claimants for endowments, but upon very different grounds. “From the first,” (said the synod’s deputation,) “it appeared to them that their acquiescence in the proposed inquiry might involve, on their part, a concession that the matter in dispute afforded a proper case for government interference and parliamentary aid. We saw at once that we could not consistently approve of a measure which led to this conclusion; our opposition to the scheme of endowments resting on this, among other grounds, that, in principle, such an application of the public money would be impolitic and unjust; that it is neither the scriptural nor the efficient mode of providing for the spiritual wants of the people. The question with the deputation was simply, whether concurring in the proposal would be a surrender, and if so, how far, of this fundamental ground of objection?” “The course we pursued was shortly this; we asserted, and continued to assert, what we conceived to be the scriptural and equitable mode of maintaining and extending the means of religious instruction; but, having nothing to fear, and much to hope for, from an investigation of facts, we expressed our readiness to give the requisite information, and in every way, as far as might be in us, to facilitate the business of inquiry.”†

As one of the individuals appointed on the royal commission had published a book against civil establishments of religion,‡ and as some of the other members had publicly expressed sentiments decidedly unfavourable to the principle of a religious establishment, the commission of the General Assembly considered it their duty to testify against the appointment of these persons by the Crown. A private remonstrance on the subject was sent off to government, on the 31st of July, by the church-extension committee, to which no answer was returned.§ A condemnatory motion was brought for-

\* See report of Dr. Cook’s speech at the meeting of the General Assembly’s commission, 30th September, 1835.

† Report of Deputation appointed by the United Associate synod, p. 11.

‡ See a *Dissertation on Church Polity*, by Andrew C. Dick, Esq. This is an ably written book. Whether we consider the elegance of its diction, the logical precision of its reasoning, or the calm spirit of philosophical inquiry which pervades all its pages, it is well entitled to hold a place in the very first class of those talented productions which have issued from the press, on the subject of ecclesiastical establishments.

§ See report of Dr. P. Macfarlane’s speech at the meeting of the Assembly’s commission, on the 13th of August, 1835.

ward by Dr. Patrick Macfarlane, at the meeting of the Assembly's commission, on the 13th of August, 1835. This motion was to the following effect:—"That the commission of the General Assembly feel it incumbent on them, in the discharge of their duty to the Church of Scotland, to state to the government the sentiments they entertain of the constitution of the commission, that they do not consider it entirely friendly to the church, individual members having publicly professed opposition to the connexion between church and state; and, farther, that with few exceptions, it does not contain the names of individuals of experience, or men interested in the church; and that, on these grounds, the commission is not entitled to the confidence of the church." This motion was opposed by Sir James Gibson Craig, who moved, "That, in the absence of the instructions to the commissioners, it was inexpedient for the Assembly to proceed farther in the matter."

After a considerable discussion, Dr. Macfarlane's motion was carried by a large majority, ninety having voted for it, while only three (including the mover) voted for Sir J. G. Craig's amendment.

When the instructions issued by government to the royal commissioners were made public, an extraordinary meeting of the General Assembly's commission, convened by a circular from the moderator (the Rev. Dr. Thomson of Perth), was held on the 30th of September, to take them into consideration. The numerous attendance of members showed the strong excitement which this subject had produced among the friends of the Establishment. The sederunt consisted of eighty-five ministers, and seventy elders. After a long speech by Dr. Chalmers, in which he gave an account of the proceedings of the Assembly's deputation in London, in the month of June, the following motion was proposed by Dr. Cook; and, after some discussion, was unanimously adopted, with the exception of two or three members, who stated that they dissented from certain parts of it:—

"The commission having maturely deliberated upon the instructions to the royal commissioners for inquiring into the means of religious instruction and pastoral superintendence afforded to the people of Scotland, express their deep regret that his Majesty's ministers have not been pleased, in consequence of the judgment of the last meeting of the commission of the General Assembly, to make any change in the composition of the said royal commission; and whereas that commission, from its authorizing the commissioners to inquire generally into the opportunities of religious worship, the means of religious instruction, and the pastoral superintendence afford-

ed to the people of Scotland, may be, and has been, interpreted as at variance with the principles and polity of the Established Church, and as calculated to weaken or overthrow it, particularly in so far as it seems to involve in it a principle subversive of this, and all other ecclesiastical establishments, viz. that whenever religious instruction and pastoral superintendence are found, to a certain extent, afforded by any sect or denomination whatsoever, there the services of a national church are not required, and may be dispensed with. The commission of the General Assembly publicly and solemnly protest against whatever has such a tendency, and declare that they consider it to be the sacred duty of the legislature to support and to protect the national church, and to secure accommodation and religious instruction to the people of Scotland, so that they may attend regularly upon divine ordinances, and may profit by the pastoral exertions and superintendence of its ministers. With a view to these most important objects, and under the protestation herein contained, they approve of such members of the church, as may be required to do so by the commissioners nominated by his Majesty, furnishing accurate information as to all statistical matters; and also approve of all church courts allowing inspection of, or giving extracts from, their records, of all entries relating to the same matters; it being clearly understood that the commission of the Assembly hold, that it is not competent to the commissioners to put to individual members any questions relating to the doctrine, worship, government, or discipline of the church."

At the first meeting of the United synod, held (October 1835) after the return of their deputation from London, a gratifying account was given by the deputation, of their proceedings while in the metropolis. The synod "unanimously agreed to return their most hearty thanks to the members of the deputation, for the fidelity, wisdom, zeal, and ability with which they performed the important and arduous service assigned to them;" and they were requested "to take measures for the immediate publication of their report."

The following resolutions were adopted in reference to the appointment of the royal commission:—

"That the synod learned, with much satisfaction, that the government had not acceded to the application of the Established Church of Scotland, 'for an immediate grant of money to all the chapels of ease and new churches which have been built, or are now in progress of building, throughout the country.'

"That although decidedly of opinion, that a demand for an endowment ought to have been rejected absolutely and un-

conditionally, they regard the appointment of a royal commission, to inquire into the ecclesiastical statistics of Scotland, as matter of high satisfaction, being fully persuaded that no accurate and sufficient information on this important subject is at present possessed by the legislature or the government; and farther, they are of opinion, that the amount of church accommodation, and of religious instruction, and of pastoral superintendence, furnished by the several religious denominations in Scotland, as well as the amount of ecclesiastical funds, not at present employed for ecclesiastical purposes, are, in the present circumstances of the country, legitimate subjects of the proposed inquiry.

“That although, in the composition of the commission, it is obvious that no just or adequate proportion has been afforded to dissenters, there being of the eleven commissioners only one dissenter for a population in which, at a moderate computation, dissenters are to churchmen, as two to three, they are desirous to afford every aid and facility to such an inquiry.

“That they have learned, with much surprise and disappointment, that it is in contemplation to confine the inquiry to those places where, according to the statements of the Established Church, a deficiency of church accommodation, and of religious instruction, is said to exist, and would respectfully but earnestly remonstrate against this limitation, because it will occasion just dissatisfaction to the dissenters throughout the country, and can only lead to partial and defective conclusions, instead of securing that ample and correct information, on the subject of inquiry, which constitutes the only safe and reasonable basis of wise and impartial legislation with regard to them; and to obtain which, was understood to be the object of the appointment of the commission.”

It was further agreed, that a memorial, embodying these resolutions, should be presented to Lord John Russell, his Majesty's principal Secretary of State for the Home department. The following memorial was accordingly prepared by a committee; and, being subscribed by the moderator and clerk, in name of the synod, was forwarded to his Lordship.

“To the Right Hon. Lord John Russell, his Majesty's principal Secretary of State for the Home department.

“The Memorial of the Ministers and Elders of the United Associate Synod of the Secession Church of Scotland, agreed to at their Meeting, 8th October, 1835.

“The Memorialists representing, in their Supreme Ecclesiastical Court, a large body of the religious population of Scotland, as well as some both in the metropolis, and other parts of England, beg leave most respectfully to make the following representation to your Lordship, as presiding over an important department of his Majesty's Government.

“Your Lordship is aware, that in consequence of an application on the part

of the Established Church of Scotland, to get endowments for several chapels of ease, lately raised by the General Assembly to the rank of parish churches, as well as for other new places of worship, proposed to be erected in different parts of the country; this synod, at their meeting in April last, appointed a deputation of their number to repair to London, there to wait on his Majesty's government, in order to present and enforce a memorial on the subject.

"Your memorialists, highly gratified as they have been with the conduct of that deputation, feel bound to express their warmest acknowledgments to your Lordship and other members of government, for the facilities afforded them in making their various communications, and for the attention given to several of their suggestions.

"Your memorialists learn in particular, with much satisfaction, that the government had not acceded to the application of the Established Church, 'for an immediate grant of money, to all the chapels of ease and new churches which have been built, or are in progress of building, throughout the country.'

"Although your memorialists are decidedly of opinion, that the demand for an endowment ought to have been rejected absolutely and unconditionally, yet they regard the appointment of a royal commission, to inquire into the ecclesiastical statistics of Scotland, as matter of high satisfaction; being fully persuaded, that no accurate and sufficient information on this important subject is at present possessed by the legislature or the government; and farther, they are of opinion, that the amount of church accommodation, and of religious instruction, and pastoral superintendence, furnished by the several religious denominations in Scotland, as well as the amount of ecclesiastical funds not at present employed for ecclesiastical purposes, are, in the present circumstances of the country, legitimate subjects of the proposed inquiry.

"Your memorialists, however, conceive that they have ground to complain, that in the composition of the commission, no just or adequate proportion has been afforded to dissenters, there being, of the eleven commissioners, only one not belonging to the Established Church. But, persuaded of the important results which an inquiry of the kind is calculated to accomplish, they are desirous to afford every aid and facility to the labours of the commissioners.

"At the same time, the memorialists cannot help expressing their regret, to learn from your Lordship's official communication to Lord Minto, that the commissioners are to confine their attention to parishes in which there is an alleged deficiency of the means of religious instruction. This your memorialists deprecate, because they conceive it is to neglect a fitting opportunity of ascertaining with correctness the ecclesiastical statistics of the country at large—a matter of some importance, as tending to show the numerical strength of the Established Church, and of the various bodies of dissenters; and thus to terminate the conflict of vague assertions regarding their comparative numbers, which may be regarded as one of the elements of irritation, in the present controversy between the friends of the Establishment and those dissenting from it.

"Such a complete and authentic table of statistics is, in the opinion of your memorialists, of very high importance in relation to the question more immediately in view, viz. the propriety of additional grants to the Church of Scotland. To confine the inquiry in the way proposed, could hardly fail to do prejudice to the cause of dissent; because, if only those places are to be included in the inquiry which are alleged to be ill supplied with the means of religious instruction, it will just be, in many instances, to restrict the survey of the commissioners to those places where dissenters are few, or where there may be none at all,—the obvious effect of which must be, to lead to partial and defective conclusions regarding the general state and efficiency of the dissenting system. It therefore appears to your memorialists, that the plan to be proceeded on, is one that will be tantamount to conceding to their opponents the choice of the ground on which the trial of strength is to be made—one that will allow them the privilege of selecting what may be, in their view, the most advantageous field of operation; and which will therefore fail to procure that ample and correct information on the subject of inquiry, which constitutes the

only safe and reasonable basis of wise and impartial legislation; and to obtain which, was understood from the conversation that passed in parliament when a commission was resolved on, to be a leading object of the measure. Your memorialists therefore feel themselves constrained, respectfully but earnestly, to remonstrate against the proposed limitation of the inquiry, unless every reasonable facility be afforded to dissenters, to bring fully into view what they have hitherto done, and what they are at present doing for the religious interests of the community at large, and especially of the poorer classes, and whether their exertions for these purposes are increasing in number, and how far they are attended with success.

"Your memorialists regret the more the limitation objected to, because it further appears from your Lordship's letter to Lord Minto, that it is the *dissenting population*, and not *dissenting church room*, that is to be taken into view; the commissioners being instructed to "Obtain an account of those who attend dissenting chapels, in order that the void not filled up by any religious sect or worship may be measured and defined." On the supposition, then, that a dissenting chapel has been built for a population not provided for by the Established Church; that the church accommodation is, from the recentness of the erection, or from the indifference of the people to religious instruction, imperfectly occupied; and farther, on the supposition, which, with very few exceptions, will prove to be the case, that the doctrines taught are the same as those exhibited in the standards of the Established Church, and which ought therefore to be taught in all her pulpits; were dissenters, in such a supposed case, made to contribute to the maintenance of an additional church, when they have already done all which the memorialists have just represented, we crave your Lordship to consider, whether they would be fairly dealt by, and whether they would not have cause to complain of injury and injustice.

"Signed, in name and by appointment of the United Associate Synod of the Secession Church, by

"ADAM THOMSON, A.M., Moderator.

"WILLIAM KIDSTON, D.D., Clerk."

The following communication was received from his Lordship, acknowledging the receipt of the memorial:—

"Whitehall, December 7, 1835.

"GENTLEMEN,—I have taken into consideration the memorial of the ministers and elders of the United Associate synod of the Secession Church of Scotland, which reached me in the beginning of last month.

"It appears to me, that the synod have not sufficiently taken into their view, the origin of the church commission. It arose, not from any wish on the part of the government, nor indeed, as I understood, of the people of Scotland, that the strength of the different religious denominations should be measured, or from a desire to compare the efficiency of the dissenting system with that of the Established Church.

"It arose, on the contrary, from a petition for a grant of public money from the Church; and a determination, on the part of the House of Commons, not to agree to such a grant without a previous inquiry into the grounds upon which the petition rested.

"It is not, therefore, a principal object of the commission to obtain statistical information as to the relative number of different sects, or to institute a comparison between the principle of an establishment, and what is called the voluntary principle.

"The Established Church have declared that they are in want of funds and that religion suffers in consequence of that want. The first duty of the commission appointed by his Majesty, is to give them very facility for making out their case.

"At the same time, the commissioners have shown, and most properly, the greatest readiness to pay attention to any information which can be afforded them by dissenting ministers. If the synod are of opinion that they can satisfactorily prove that any deficiency now existing in the means and op-

portunities of religious worship and instruction can be supplied by the energy and exertions of the dissenters, I am convinced that the commissioners will listen to any facts or statements which the synod can bring forward for that purpose.

"I confess I do not perceive the justice of the last argument urged by the synod. On the supposition that a dissenting chapel has been built for a population not provided for by the church, this must have happened either in a parish where churchmen do not complain of want of means, or where they do so complain. In the former case, no additional contributions from the dissenters will be required. If, on the other hand, the church complains of want of means in such a parish, the limitations stated in my letter to Lord Minto will not apply; and every circumstance of the case will be fairly and impartially investigated by the commissioners.

"I shall communicate a copy of the memorial of the synod, and of my reply, to the commissioners, and you may rest assured that no positive restriction will be placed on their inquiries, except that which is required by an anxious desire on the part of my colleagues and myself, not to render their labours fruitless and interminable. I have the honour to be, Gentlemen, your most obedient humble servant,

"J. RUSSELL."

On the 27th of April, 1836, the United synod took under their consideration this answer from Lord John Russell to the memorial; and, after some deliberation, they resolved that another memorial should be prepared, and forwarded to his Lordship. They also appointed the ministers in Edinburgh and Leith, with the elders from their sessions, a committee (Mr. Harper of Leith convener), "to watch over the steps which may be taken to increase the number of places of worship, and of endowments, in connexion with the Established Church." All presbyteries and individual members were enjoined to keep this object in view, and to give such information to the committee as might serve for their direction.

During the elections that took place, in the summer of 1837, for a new parliament, after the accession of her present Majesty to the throne, the granting of endowments to the national church was one of the testing questions put to candidates; and a large proportion, if not the whole, of the Scottish elections were decided chiefly on this ground. Many liberal churchmen united with dissenters in returning members of parliament, who were known or supposed to be hostile to the granting of endowments. As Scotland returned, in that election, a decided majority of liberal members, the greater part of whom expressed themselves in very decided terms on this question, this may be regarded as furnishing a strong presumptive proof, that the voice of the majority of electors, in this northern part of the island, is against the claims of the national church upon this point.

A report became prevalent, during the winter of the year now mentioned, that it was the intention of her Majesty's ministers to grant endowments to the Church of Scotland from

the Bishops' Teinds,—a fund which government supposed to be at their own disposal, and which they conceived to be available for religious purposes. This report produced alarm among the various classes of dissenters, and roused them to increased activity. Large meetings were held in Edinburgh and Glasgow, and in other towns, to petition against any grant being made from this or any other fund. To give a grant to the national church from the Bishops' Teinds, it was affirmed, would be as unjust and as obnoxious to dissenters, as granting a sum directly from the consolidated fund; the one being as much national property as the other.

In the month of January 1838, extraordinary meetings were convened, by circular, of the United Associate and Relief synods, and of the Congregational Union of Scotland, to consider what measures it would be proper to adopt, in order to oppose the threatened grant. So great was the interest excited among the members of these various associations, that, though the meetings were called at a very inclement season of the year, they were numerously attended by ministers and laymen, assembled from all parts of the country. Strong resolutions were adopted at all of these meetings; and memorials embodying the resolutions were prepared and addressed to her Majesty's government. It was further resolved to send deputations to London, to obtain an interview with the leading members of government, to wait upon members of parliament, and to use every mean in their power to prevent the meditated act of injustice from being perpetrated. The United synod appointed a special committee to watch over this business; and the committee was instructed "to adopt whatever measures they might deem necessary, in order to the attainment of the object in view; particularly, to recommend it, if they should see cause, to every presbytery, and session, and congregation, under the inspection of the synod, to petition parliament on the subject; to use means for rousing their countrymen in the chief towns in England, to a sense of the enormity of taxing all the inhabitants of Great Britain and Ireland, in order to gratify the humour of a few so called church-extensionists in Scotland; and to solicit the powerful aid of the more active and influential among the English dissenters."

Early in spring, the Rev. Dr. Beattie, and the Rev. Messrs. Harper and King, proceeded to London, as a deputation from the United Associate synod, to lay before her Majesty's government the synod's memorial, and to take such steps as they might think proper, for defeating the proposed grant of endowments from the Bishops' Teinds, or from any public fund whatever. While engaged in the metropolis, executing the task

assigned them, they enjoyed the co-operation of the Rev. Drs. Hough and Wardlaw of Glasgow, who had been appointed, along with Mr. Harper, as deputies on the same errand from the Scottish Central Board ; and also of the Rev. John French, one of the Relief ministers in Edinburgh, who had been commissioned to the same work by the synod to which he belonged. The whole of these gentlemen, though representing different bodies of dissenters, acted in concert. Distinguished as they are for their excellent business habits, for the urbanity of their manners, for their general talents, and for their thorough acquaintance with the questions which they were required to propound and discuss, it is scarcely possible that a more happy selection could have been made of individuals fitted to act as representatives of the Scottish dissenters in the South. During their sojourn in the British metropolis, they were altogether unremitting in their labours. They were literally "instant in season and out of season." Commoners and peers of the realm heard from their lips doctrines which they had not previously been accustomed to hear. Distinguished statesmen and members of parliament, in the repeated audiences which they held with them, had their minds inoculated with wholesome truths, on the subject of endowed and unendowed churches, which, like good seed dropped into a fertile soil, may spring up at no distant period, and produce the very best of fruit.

The members of the deputation were zealously seconded in their exertions by many of the most influential dissenting ministers in London, and by not a few of the people connected with their congregations. A large and most enthusiastic meeting was held on the 7th of April, at the City of London Tavern, to petition both Houses of parliament against granting additional endowments to the Church of Scotland. At this meeting, Charles Lushington, Esq., M.P., presided ; and an excellent spirit was displayed in behalf of the cause, for the promoting of which they were assembled. The addresses of the deputation were warmly responded to by the crowded audience ; and speeches, advocating the claims of Scottish dissenters, were delivered by Mr. Baines, M.P. for Leeds ; Mr. Gillon, M.P. for the Falkirk district of Burghs ; and also by several of the London ministers. The labours of the deputation were not confined to the metropolis. They visited, in detachments, some of the large provincial towns of England, where meetings were held, equally numerous and enthusiastic with the one that took place in London, and where dissenters and liberal churchmen vied with one another in expressing their determination to oppose any additional grants of money being made, out of the public treasury, to the Church of Scotland.

Meanwhile, the Scottish church-extenders were not idle.

They sent a deputation to London, to represent their case to her Majesty's ministers. This deputation visited the metropolis at the same time with the dissenting deputies, and laboured with no less zeal and assiduity in endeavouring to accomplish the object of their mission. The intentions of the ministry, with regard to the endowment question, were at length made public; and, from the declarations which they made in parliament, it became apparent, that, though they could not well avoid doing something, they were resolved to do as little as they possibly could. The following is an outline of the course which Lord Melbourne, First Lord of the Treasury, stated it was the design of the ministry to pursue, with regard to religious instruction in Scotland:—

1. That the Bishops' teinds shall be applied in providing for the religious destitution existing in certain Highland and rural parishes, having no unexhausted teinds.

2. That an alteration shall be made of the Act, 1707, respecting the division of parishes in Scotland, so as to afford increased facilities for the application of the unexhausted teinds in the hands of private proprietors, to relieve the destitution of such rural parishes as have unexhausted teinds belonging to them.

3. That nothing shall be done for the towns; that no grant shall be made from any source to provide additional means of religious instruction for them.\*

This intended scheme, when it was first announced, shared the common fate of all half-measures. It pleased neither party. The dissenters were not satisfied with it, because it granted too much. They condemned it, because it distinctly recognised the principle of granting additional endowments, though to a limited extent. The advocates for church-extension were equally dissatisfied with it, because it did not at all answer either their demands or their expectations. At the first meeting of the General Assembly held (May, 1838) after the intentions of government were made public, a series of resolutions was adopted; lamenting the sad religious destitution that prevailed; mourning over the apathy of her Majesty's ministers on this subject; accusing them of a dereliction of a public duty, and of violating a pledge "held out by the previous proceedings of government, in so far as the great towns are concerned, to the church and people of Scotland;" and calling upon the friends of church-extension not to be discouraged by the undutiful conduct of the state toward the church, but heroically to persevere till they had "secured the triumph of their cause."

\* See Report of Proceedings of the General Assembly, 22d May, 1838.

No steps have as yet been taken to carry the above scheme into effect. Though Sir Robert Peel declared in his place in parliament, during the summer of 1838, that he intended, at an early period of the ensuing session, to call the attention of the House to the claims of the Church of Scotland for additional endowments, yet he has, since the commencement of the present session (1839), observed a profound silence on the subject. Not the slightest indication has been given of any intended movement being made either by him or by his supporters in the House. The question of endowments may, therefore, in the mean time, be considered, in so far as parliament is concerned, if not finally set at rest, at least in a state of abeyance. Neither the ministerial nor the opposition parties in the House seem inclined to sympathize with the cry that has been raised about religious destitution in Scotland. From the circumstance of no voice having been lifted up this session, in either the upper or the lower house of parliament, in behalf of the demands of the church, it has been inferred that she has given offence to her political friends, by the proceedings of her judicatories in opposing the decisions of the civil court on the Auchterarder and Lethendy cases; and also by the unguarded and uncourteous language which some of her ministers employed, in reference to the Episcopalian church, when lately celebrating the second centenary of the General Assembly, that met at Glasgow in 1638.

The dissenters of Scotland have been reproached and vilified, in no measured terms, by the supporters of the church-extension scheme, for the strenuous, and hitherto successful, opposition which they have given to the granting of endowments out of the public funds. They have been accused of disregarding the spiritual interests of the poor, of attempting to check the progress of religion in their native land, and of seeking to gratify a fierce and rancorous partisanship, at the expense of their country's welfare. The cry has been raised, loud and long,—“Lo! there are tens, nay hundreds, of thousands of our poor countrymen perishing for lack of knowledge; and these heartless, agitating, political dissenters, will neither impart unto them the means of grace themselves, nor permit others to do so!” The attempt which dissenters have been making to oppose the aggressive schemes of the church-extension party, has been represented as so utterly irreligious, so daringly impious, that no person who is engaged in the unhalloved undertaking (it has been publicly affirmed) can with a good conscience present a prayer to the throne of God for success to crown his exertions.

Such statements as these, however sincere and honest the persons may be who utter them, are certainly not “the words

of truth and soberness." To show how completely they are at variance with the facts of the case, and with the rules of charity and of common equity, it may be proper to state, in a few sentences, how the matter stands in this struggle between the Establishment and dissenters.

For more than a hundred years, the great mass of the people of Scotland were sadly neglected by the ministers connected with the Established Church. Little or no attention was paid either to their wishes or their wants by their spiritual rulers. The population went on, year after year, increasing. New villages sprung into existence, and the old towns were greatly extended. Not only were no exertions made by the ecclesiastical judicatories of the Establishment to provide the means of religious instruction for the many thousands, who were destitute of it, but, in general, obstacles were thrown in the way of the erection of additional places of worship. Nor was this the worst of it. The people were not permitted to have any voice in the election of their ministers. Persons whom the people hated and despised were thrust in, by the strong arm of power, upon the parishes. In large districts of the country the gospel was not faithfully preached, ministerial visitations were neglected, and, while the stipend was drawn as regularly as the term day came round, the work, for which the stipend was paid, was not performed. In these circumstances, the Secession first arose, then the Relief, then the Independents and Baptists, and other dissenting communities. Churches, or, as they were contemptuously termed, *meeting-houses*, were built by the spontaneous liberality of the people in localities where no place of worship had ever been erected before—congregations were formed—ministers were called and ordained, and supported by the voluntary contributions of their flocks. The supineness and stateliness of the established clergy contrasted most unfavourably, in the eyes of the Scottish peasantry and mechanics, with the activity and homeliness of the dissenting ministers. The latter, notwithstanding the occasional attempts made to keep them down, like the Hebrews in Egypt, "multiplied and grew." In the course of less than a century, they increased to the amount of several hundreds,\* and many of them had the over-

\* A writer in the April number of the *United Secession Magazine* (present year), gives an abridged view of the results of the Church Commissioners' statistical inquiries; from which it appears, that the number of dissenting congregations visited by the Commissioners, amounted to 756; and the number unvisited by them amounts to 244, making a total of *one thousand* dissenting congregations in Scotland. But several of these congregations are stations or vacancies that have never enjoyed a regularly ordained ministry; others of them are under the superintendence of lay preachers. Suppose that, in consideration of these circumstances, a deduction be made of 200 from the total

sight of large and flourishing congregations. They began to acquire influence in the country from their numbers, and talents, and energy. The cause of dissent prospered in both town and country; so much so, that, in some localities, its adherents considerably outnumbered those of the Establishment; and the churches of the one were, in general, much better attended than the churches of the other. At length came the voluntary church controversy, which produced a great excitement among the people, by the novelty and boldness of the change which it proposed accomplishing; namely, doing away with civil establishments of religion altogether. Men began seriously to inquire, whether it would not be better, both for the nation and for the church, that religion should be left unfettered by any connexion with the state, and that each sect should be allowed to support its own institutions, by means of the voluntary contributions of its adherents; and the minds of multitudes, who had never before thought upon the subject, were completely revolutionized by the discussions that were carried on, so that they were brought to give a decided answer to the question in the affirmative.

In these circumstances, the church-extension scheme was adopted by the General Assembly, and the cry for new endowments arose. It is not concealed by the promoters of this scheme, that the ultimate object in view is the extinction of dissent. Dr. Chalmers, and those who are co-operating with him, in carrying on this work, have declared that they will not rest satisfied, until a church in connexion with the Establishment shall be built in every locality, containing a population of from twelve hundred to two thousand souls; and until a minister shall be appointed, who shall have the pastoral superintendence of these souls. According to the vocabulary of these persons, every locality is destitute, where there is no place of worship belonging to the Establishment, even though there should be one or more dissenting churches in the district, with faithful gospel ministers labouring among the population. So high and arrogant are the notions entertained on this point, by the church party, that a public and solemn protest, as we have seen, was entered by the Commission of the General Assembly on their record, against the government, for presuming to authorize the Royal Commissioners to inquire into the means of religious instruction and pastoral superintendence, afforded by dissenters as well as by the national church, on account of its involving "a prin-

amount, which is certainly a liberal allowance for the vacant congregations and the lay preachers, and there will remain the goodly number of 800 regularly ordained dissenting ministers in Scotland, a very large proportion of whom will be found to be faithful preachers of the gospel.

ciple subversive of this and all other ecclesiastical establishments." Acting according to their favourite theory, of parcelling out the whole population among the ministers belonging to the Established Church, and regarding the dissenting ministers and their congregations as mere nonentities, that ought not to be mentioned nor taken into account in any shape whatever, they have put down many of the newly erected churches in localities where dissenting places of worship have long been in existence, with but a thin population, and where there was not the slightest want either of church accommodation or of pastoral superintendence.

It is for the support of churches built in such circumstances, as well as of the old Chapels of Ease, that endowments are clamorously demanded from the public treasury; and dissenters say to their brethren in the Establishment, "No; endowments you shall not have, if we can help it; for we think it wrong, in point of principle, to grant endowments out of the public funds to any sect; and, in an especial manner, we regard it as both unjust and oppressive to be compelled to pay even the smallest sum, either directly or indirectly, for the support of churches that have been erected where there was no particular need for them, and without any apparent object in view but the scattering of our congregations and the ruin of our cause."

Dissenters cannot, and do not, object to the adherents of the Establishment building as many churches as they please, and building them where they please, provided they erect and maintain them at their own expense, in the same way that dissenters erect and maintain theirs. But it is scarcely possible to conceive of injustice or effrontery greater than that which is involved in the church-extension scheme. *First*, deliberately to propose a plan intended to ruin the cause of dissenters; *Secondly*, to ask money from the public treasury for the purpose of carrying this plan into effect, and thereby make dissenters indirectly lend a helping hand in ruining their own congregations; *Thirdly*, to accuse dissenters of being political agitators, irreligious, and enemies to the poor and to their country, because they "set their face like a flint" against such unreasonable and exorbitant demands. This is no exaggerated account of the state of the case. It is a plain and literal statement of what the church-extension party are actually doing: And all this, too, after the dissenters of Scotland, poor though they be, have erected, during the course of a century, *one thousand* places of worship at their own expense, and chiefly for the accommodation of the poorer classes. Instead of insult and oppressive treatment, they deserve the gratitude of their country. They have shown by their conduct,

what the voluntary principle in religious matters is capable of accomplishing, however much it be sneered at in certain quarters. The question is a simple one, and may be easily answered without any great proficiency in arithmetic. If *one-third* of the population, and that by far the poorest portion of it, have erected, in the course of a century, and are at this moment maintaining, out of their daily earnings, *one thousand* places of worship in Scotland, how much might have been done in providing the means of religious instruction for all classes, if the other two-thirds, including almost all the great and wealthy in this northern part of the island, had contributed, I do not say a proportional, but an equal amount of their substance with their poorer brethren? The answer which must be returned to such a question as this will show that, whatever excuses men may be inclined to make in order to save their purses, there is at least no want of ability in this country to provide, in ample abundance, without any application to the public treasury, the means of religious instruction and pastoral superintendence for the whole population.

In the course of the controversy which has been carried on concerning ecclesiastical establishments, much abuse has been lavished on the ministers of the United Secession church, for the decided part which the great majority of them have taken in opposing establishments. They have been accused of perjury, apostacy, jesuitism, and a total abandonment of the religious principles held by their forefathers. It is easy to apply terms of reproach: to do so requires no particular gift, except the possession of a moderate portion of hardihood; and it affords no proof that a person is in the right. Besides, it is not the most honourable method of achieving a victory over an antagonist, to endeavour to excite prejudice against the cause which he supports, by attempting to vilify his character. Whatever opinion may be entertained of the voluntary church sentiments held by a large proportion of the ministers of the United Associate synod, their conduct in the avowal of these sentiments has been open, and honest, and manly. They have aimed at no concealment, and sought no subterfuge; and on what ground such charges as the above can, with truth, be preferred against them, I am at a loss to conceive. It is true that the Fathers of the Secession, after they were expelled from the national church, declared themselves friendly to the standards and constitution of the church which had treated them so unjustly; but it is also true, that the very same persons, within little more than ten years after the Secession commenced, officially published, in their Answers to Mr. Nairn, sentiments which are as completely subversive of

all civil establishments of religion, as any that have been penned during the heat of the present controversy. It is true that the section of the Secession Church which composed the Associate synod, in the Re-exhibition of their Testimony, formally declared their adherence to the principle of an establishment, while they disowned all persecuting and intolerant measures in religion; but it is also true that the other portion of the Secession which constituted the General Associate synod, when they remodelled their Testimony, formally declared the unlawfulness of the connexion between church and state, and swept away from their public profession every thing that could be construed as giving any countenance to the doctrine of a religious establishment. Again, when the union of the two synods took place in 1820, a note was appended to the second article of the Basis, which refers to the Westminster Confession of Faith, in which it is expressly declared, that while the United synod "do not require uniformity of sentiment on the subject of the magistrate's power about ecclesiastical affairs," they adhere to the anti-establishment doctrine promulgated by the Associate Presbytery in 1743. And when the synod published, in 1827, a new Testimony, they introduced a chapter "concerning the relations of Church and State." In this chapter they declared, that "Religion, abstractly viewed, is essential to the well-being of society, and to the efficient exercise of civil government, and is therefore the concern of legislators and of civil rulers, as well as of others, in their several situations;" also that "the Christian religion, as might be expected from its divine origin and intended universality, is the best calculated for promoting the interests of civil society, and therefore deserves the countenance of the civil powers:" But they guarded against all misinterpretation of such language, by further declaring, "That the countenance given to it (the Christian religion) must not be inconsistent with its own spirit and enactments. It must not be introduced nor propagated by force. It disclaims and prohibits all persecution;" also, "That the church and the state are entirely distinct, capable of existing without the slightest intrusive interference with the proper province of each, and ought not so to interfere. Erastian supremacy of the state over the church, and anti-christian domination of the church over the state, and all schemes of connexion tending to either, ought to be avoided."

With such sentiments as these on record, and with an explicit declaration, made by the synod at the period of the re-union, that they "do not require uniformity of sentiment on the subject of the magistrate's power about ecclesiastical affairs," how senseless is the cry about perjury and apostacy.

But I admit, that both the ministers and people of the Secession Church have become, in general, much more decided in their opposition to ecclesiastical establishments, than they have been at any former period of their history. They are taking much higher and firmer ground on the question about establishments. This question has of late years undergone a thorough investigation, and is much better understood in all its bearings. The numerous and able publications that have been put into circulation on this subject, and the many public discussions that have taken place, have produced, among the members of the United Secession Church, a wide-spread and deep-rooted conviction, that civil establishments of religion are unscriptural, unjust, impolitic, and unnecessary. Were a vote to be taken in the United synod, requiring an expression of opinion concerning them, the voice of condemnation would be loud and general, while the minority would be small indeed, that would lift a voice in their favour. The statements now made are no less applicable to the mass of the people, than they are to the ministers. It is a mistaken impression to suppose that the anti-establishment notions are more prevalent, in proportion, among the ministers, than they are among the people of the Secession. The reverse I firmly believe to be the case. Were the people to be polled, an overwhelming majority, in almost all the congregations, would be found most determined against the connexion between church and state, and keen in favour of voluntary church principles.

In determining whether the Secession ministers and people have done right or wrong, in espousing with such ardour the cause of voluntary churches, in opposition to religious establishments, the question ought not to be, whether the opinions which they hold on this question be the same as those which their forefathers held; but, whether they be according to Scripture or not. This is the point on which the approbation or disapprobation of their conduct ought to turn. If the opinions which they hold be according to Scripture, then, instead of condemnation, they are entitled to praise, on account of having so generally and so decidedly embraced them, even though they should be different, in some respects, from those of their pious forefathers.

I am no zealot on this much-agitated subject. I have hitherto taken no part in the discussion of it. Any opinions which I held, during the earlier period of my ministry, concerning it, though probably not very decided either way, inclined rather in favour of establishments than against them. In common with many of my brethren in the ministry, I considered that the evils, the grievous evils, connected with the

existing establishments in this country which we all saw and condemned, were not so much owing to the principle of an establishment being in itself wrong, as to that liability to abuse, which is inseparably connected with all human institutions. But I am free to confess, that, from a more extensive course of reading on this subject, and from maturer reflection, my mind has gradually opened to the conviction, the firm and deliberate conviction, that the establishment of the Christian religion, in any form, by penal laws, is contrary to the nature of Christianity, obstructive of the progress of the gospel, highly injurious to the civil interests of society, and productive of great mischief, in a variety of ways, to the church of Christ. While I do not wish to detract any thing from the learning and ability that have been displayed by those who have written in defence of establishments, the following points have, in my opinion, been most satisfactorily established by the writers on the voluntary church side of the question, namely ;—That neither Christ, the great lawgiver of Zion, nor any one of his inspired apostles, has given the slightest hint, in the New Testament, about such a thing as an establishment being either necessary or intended for the Christian church ; that, on the contrary, repeated declarations are made by Christ and his apostles, which are decidedly in favour of Christianity being left entirely free from any alliance with the governments of this world, and of its being permitted to pursue its peaceful and benevolent career, without any compulsory methods being employed either to uphold or propagate it ; that, during the first three centuries, no civil establishment of Christianity existed, and yet, during that period, it prospered greatly, not merely without the aid of the civil power, but in spite of a long-continued series of bloody persecutions ; that the establishment of Christianity by Constantine the Great, and the subsequent worldly honours which were conferred upon it, if they did not generate, at least multiplied and increased, to a fearful extent, errors and corruptions in the Christian Church ; that the religious establishments, which have existed, in one form or another, from the time of Constantine till the present period, have been a fruitful source of wars and persecutions among the nations of Christendom, and have been productive of incalculable mischiefs to the world ; and, finally, that, in a country where a variety of religious parties exist, to establish and endow any one at the expense of the rest, is a violation of the rules of justice, contrary to sound policy, and throws society into confusion, by occasioning animosities and perpetual bickerings between the favoured and the *tabooed* sects. Such points as these, the voluntary church writers have established, by adducing in support of them a

weight of evidence, and bringing to bear upon them a force of reasoning, which have already told powerfully upon the minds of thousands in this country, and which, as time rolls on, will gradually leaven the mass of the community, until "the whole lump be leavened." This process the Secession Church has already, to a considerable extent, undergone; and the consequence is, that it now occupies the position of a *dissenting* as well as a *seceding* community.

I have now completed my review of the Secession History. I have traced its progress from its small and humble beginning, till the present eventful era. I have fully and faithfully detailed, to the best of my ability, the proceedings of that church, to which I esteem it an honour to belong. Its past course, though marked by occasional reverses, has been upon the whole prosperous. Whatever may have been the faults connected with it, the sound of a faithful gospel ministry has always been heard in its pulpits. It has held forth, with plainness, affection, and fidelity, the word of life, for the benefit of others. While it has pursued its chequered course, amid much opposition from without, and sometimes amid fightings within, it has gradually enlarged the sphere of its operation, and increased the number of its adherents. It has not only been honoured of God, to confer important benefits upon our own island, but Ireland, Nova Scotia, and the States of America, owe to it a debt of gratitude. It exerted itself in sending the gospel to the inhabitants of these countries, when few religious societies took any notice of them. The ministers and people of the Secession Church have done much to promote the cause of education in this country; they have thrown the weight of their influence into the scale of humanity; and they have ever been found on the side of enlightened freedom, struggling against oppression, in all its forms. The Secession has exercised a reflex influence, of a beneficial kind, upon the national church itself, by checking thy progress of corruption in it, by exciting a spirit of wholesome rivalry amongst its ministers, and thereby preventing it from becoming wholly stagnant.

The following honourable testimony to the general excellence of the Secession ministers, and to the beneficial influence which they have exercised upon the Establishment, is extracted from a literary periodical, which has not often been guilty of praising dissenters at the expense of the mother church; and it is therefore entitled to greater credit, when at any time it employs the language of eulogy in reference to the former:—  
"The ministers which belong to the Scottish Secession, are in general men of great moral integrity, considerable learning, and very extensive efficiency, as Bible, and consequently as

useful, preachers. Indeed, I do not know what would now become of the *Mother Church* without them; for, though she assuredly retains a supremacy in all the great essentials of a national establishment; it must be confessed she requires to be looked after, for she has a kind of natural infirmity about her, which strongly induces sleep; and, having sunk for water, amidst the depths of worldly wisdom, her pitcher is not always stored with the most wholesome beverage, nor are her children always so ready as she would wish to use it.”\*

With regard to the future progress of the Secession Church, I augur favourably. She is destined still, I trust, to prove, for a long number of years, a blessing to our country. She possesses great resources for doing good, and criminal indeed shall she be, if she begin to slumber at her post, and forget the high purpose for which all churches ought to exist,—the advancement of the sacred cause of the Redeemer upon earth. Much though she has done in times past, according to her ability, much more is required of her in time to come. She must not be sparing of her resources, but employ them in a more energetic manner, and on a more extensive scale, than she has ever yet done. Let her ministers and people show, by the sacrifices they are willing to make, and by the labours they are willing to undergo, that they are animated by a spirit of entire devotedness to the Saviour; that his honour is dearer to them than any worldly consideration; and that they feel exceedingly grateful to him for the high privileges which they are permitted to enjoy.

Whatever hopes might, in former years, be cherished of the great body of the Seceders being brought back again into the fold of the national church, these hopes are now extinguished. The voluntary church controversy has fixed between the Secession and the Establishment a great gulf, across which at present there is no passage. The former is resolved to maintain, at all hazards, the principle of voluntary churches; the latter is equally resolved that nothing shall move it from the ground which it has hitherto occupied, viz. that compulsion is necessary, in some form or another, for the support of religion. These two churches must, therefore, continue moving on, each in its own direction. It will be seen in the issue, which of them is pursuing the safest and most honourable path. Infinite wisdom has its own inscrutable purposes to accomplish, by means of the struggle which is now carrying on; and dark and troubled though the horizon of the religious world at present be, that Almighty Being, who rides in the storm, and directs the whirlwind, may, sooner than we are aware of,

\* Blackwood's Magazine for December, 1822, p. 273

say to the conflicting elements, "Peace, be still!" and a hymn of jubilee may ere long be heard ascending upward, loud and harmonious, from the reunited church of Christ, ascribing "Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power unto Him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb, for ever and ever."

## A P P E N D I X.

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IN this Appendix, I propose giving some account of the statistics of the United Secession Church. It is not my intention to give statistical details of particular congregations. The materials which I have in my possession, would enable me to give a variety of details of this description, with regard to a large portion of the congregations connected with the United Associate synod. Such a work would be highly interesting and useful. But I have been precluded from giving congregational statistics, at present, by two considerations: First, it would have swelled these volumes \* to an unreasonable size, or would have required me to add a third to them; and, secondly, some of the ministers, to whom I applied, by circular, for statistical information, felt squeamish at the idea of having any thing published about their congregations; and, to allay their fears, I embodied in my circular a promise that I would not publish any particulars they might state concerning their congregations, without leave asked and obtained. Should, however, the present work meet with any thing like a favourable reception from the public, and should providence be pleased to spare me, I have some design of publishing a work, that shall be supplementary to the present, and which shall consist of historical notices of some of the older, as well as more recently formed, congregations, and which shall contain a variety of statistical information concerning the Secession in general. In the mean time, I shall confine myself to a statement of the general results, which have been carefully deduced from the authentic documents that have been placed at my disposal. These results will be found, on perusal, to be in the highest degree gratifying to the ministers and people of the Secession. They are fitted to convince even the most prejudiced and sceptical, that the voluntary principle, in matters of religion, is a most powerful one. They show that this principle, which has been so sadly vilified, and so frequently sneered at, can, even amongst a class of people comparatively poor, and in circumstances peculiarly unfavourable for its operation, achieve wonders.

It may be proper to state what are the materials from which the following statistical results have been deduced, to show how far they are entitled to credit. In answer to a circular addressed to all the ministers of the United Secession Church, I received 210 returns, containing information on the various points to which the circular referred. By means of the answers returned to the Synod's statistical inquiries, in 1836 and 1837, and also by means of the Reports (lately published) of the Commissioners for Religious Instruction, I have obtained authentic information concerning a considerable number of those

\* This work, now comprised in one volume, was originally published in two.

congregations, from the ministers of which no answers were returned to my circular; so that, from these various sources, I am enabled to give authentic statements concerning population, communicants, stipends, mansees, Sabbath schools, poor, missionary associations, &c., founded on returns from no fewer than 302 congregations. There are still 59 congregations, exclusive of home mission stations, concerning which I have no means of stating any authentic particulars, as they are not included in any of the above returns. But if we take the average of those congregations, the particulars of which have been correctly ascertained, and apply it to those congregations concerning which no information has been given, we will thus arrive at a tolerably accurate estimate with regard to the whole. *Perfect accuracy*, in an investigation of this kind, is scarcely to be expected; because, in any considerably extended society, changes are taking place during the course of even a single year, by which the calculations will, to a certain extent, be affected. All that any reasonable person can expect is such a degree of accuracy, founded on authentic documents, as will give, upon the whole, a fair and correct view of that society, to which the statistics are designed to apply. Such a view, the Author flatters himself, is here given of the present condition of the United Secession Church. He can safely say, that he has spared no pains in making his calculations accurate; and, in all those cases where the information was not specifically given, but left to be inferred from certain *data* that were furnished, he carefully endeavoured to guard against over-statement, thinking it safest to err on the opposite side. So sensitive has he been on this point, that, however favourable the view of the Secession which is here given, he is firmly convinced that it is even less so than the reality warrants.

The United Secession Church includes, at present, in her communion, 361 regularly-organized congregations, exclusive of mission stations at home and abroad. These congregations are placed under the superintendence of 22 presbyteries, in subordination to the United Associate synod. The names of the presbyteries are—Edinburgh, Glasgow, Stirling and Falkirk, Dunfermline, Cupar, Kirkcaldy, Perth, Forfar, Aberdeen, Elgin, Stewartfield, Orkney, Lanark, Kilmarnock, Wigton, Dumfries, Annan and Carlisle, Selkirk, Coldstream and Berwick, Newcastle, Lancashire, and London. The religious society, which is thus so widely ramified, has existed now for a period of nearly one hundred and six years. It may be gratifying to show the regular and steady progress which it has made, during the past period of its existence, by marking the gradual increase of its ministers and congregations, from one epoch of its history to another.

When the Associate Presbytery was first constituted by the Fathers of the Secession, on the 6th of December, 1733, the number of the brethren who took this important step amounted only to *four*.

When the General Assembly pronounced sentence of deposition on the members of the Associate Presbytery, on the 15th of May, 1740, their number had increased to *eight*.

Five years after this, when the Associate Presbytery constituted itself into a synod, on the first Tuesday of March, 1745, the number of the brethren amounted to *twenty-six*.

When the division, occasioned by the burghess-oath controversy, took place, on the 9th of April, 1747, the number of ministers had increased to *thirty-two*.

When the re-union was accomplished, on the 5th of September, 1820, the number of ministers belonging to the two synods that were united on that occasion, amounted to *two hundred and sixty-two*.

Since that event took place, a period of nearly nineteen years has elapsed; and the number of ordained ministers, who are members of the United Associate synod, amounts, at the present period, to *three hundred and fifty-seven*, being an increase, since the re-union, of nearly *one hundred* ministers.\*

Again, another method of showing the progressive increase of the Secession, is by marking the number of congregations that have been formed, during each period of ten years that has elapsed, since the commencement of

\* If we deduct eight ministers, who did not join the Union Synod, and who are included in the above 257, this will make the increase, since the period of the re-union, to be upwards of a hundred.

the Secession. The following statement will show this. So far as I have been able to ascertain the dates of the formation of the various congregations in the Secession, the numbers formed during each period of ten years are—

From the year 1733, when the Associate Presbytery was first constituted, till 1740,		22 congregations,
From 1740 till 1749, (both years inclusive)		24 .....
... 1750 ... 1759,		27 .....
... 1760 ... 1769,		23 .....
... 1770 ... 1779,		24 .....
... 1780 ... 1789,		33 .....
... 1790 ... 1799,		47 .....
... 1800 ... 1809,		22 .....
... 1810 ... 1819,		24 .....
... 1820 ... 1829,		48 .....
... 1830 ... 1839,		35 .....

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There are 29 congregations, the dates of whose formation I have not as yet been able to ascertain; and these, of course, are not included in the above enumeration. The reader will perceive, from the statement now given, first, that the union has tended greatly to promote the increase and prosperity of the Secession; and, secondly, that it still continues to make rapid progress, notwithstanding the heats and animosities occasioned by the discussion of the voluntary church question.

In the following table, I have arranged the returns made from 302 congregations, according to the presbyteries in which the congregations are situated. The table will show the amount of Secession population (including persons of all ages), belonging to each presbytery, so far as the returns go; the number of communicants; the amount of stipend paid; the Sabbath schools and classes; the number of young persons receiving religious instruction in these schools and classes; the amount of money annually paid to the poor, and the sum-total collected for missionary purposes by associations in the various congregations. It is necessary, however, to premise that while, in some of the presbyteries, the list of returns from the congregations is complete, there are others of the presbyteries in which the returns have been only partially made. I have marked the number of returns wanting from each presbytery; and, in the case of the deficient presbyteries, the reader will understand, that the figures noted down under each head, do not express the whole amount of Secession population, &c. belonging to these presbyteries, but merely the amount of the returns that have been given. I have summed up, at the bottom of the table, the amount total, in each column, of the returns made from the 302 congregations; and, after taking the average for each congregation, I have added, according to this average, the proportion of the different items belonging to the fifty-nine congregations, from which no returns have been received; and the reader has thus presented to him, at one view, the gross amount, for the whole United Secession Church, of the various particulars stated in the different columns.

TABLE OF THE STATISTICS OF THE UNITED SECESSION CHURCH.

PRESBYTERIES.	Congrega- tions in each Presbytery.	Congrega- tions not reported on.	Population, in- cluding young and old.	Communi- cants.	Stipends.	Sabbath Schools and Classes.	Scholars.	Amount given to the Poor.	Amount col- lected by Reli- gious Associa- tions.
Edinburgh, .....	37	..	32109	17708	£6454	68	3036	£774	£2406
Glasgow, .....	47	..	42516	19068	8137	119	6592	933	2746
Stirling, .....	22	..	16944	7979	2740	35	2307	213	548
Dunfermline, .....	18	..	14915	6008	1615	18	1325	186	345
Cupar, .....	19	3	9588	4833	1725	24	1075	37	163
Kirkcaldy, .....	8	..	6888	3238	870	9	546	98	78
Perth, .....	25	5	10660	6087	2333	40	1537	237	249
Forfar, .....	19	3	6848	3567	1760	22	1183	100	233
Aberdeen, .....	9	6	2650	1320	500	8	275	61	62
Elgin, .....	13	8	3665	853	550	8	345	14	68
Stewartfield, .....	11	5	2039	797	501	17	567	11	84
Orkney, .....	11	..	8614	4054	1076	66	2457	50	316
Inarnk, .....	10	2	4863	2479	673	5	224	57	118
Kilmarnock, .....	22	..	13780	6437	2325	35	2263	243	471
Wigtown, .....	7	1	2926	1350	626	18	545	27	111
Dumfries, .....	12	4	4841	2125	859	8	363	35	46
Annan and Carlisle, .....	14	5	5511	1802	903	18	1461	22	104
Selkirk, .....	12	..	10926	6157	1399	15	1166	39	202
Coldstream and Berwick, .....	21	6	11888	6571	1831	28	1427	29	343
Newcastle, .....	19	7	5299	1560	1180	23	1222	16	135
Lauchshire, .....	6	3	2610	600	480	7	830	23	105
London, .....	4	1	2300	886	1050	7	690	147	339
<b>Totals, .....</b>	<b>361</b>	<b>59</b>	<b>222180</b>	<b>105479</b>	<b>£39586</b>	<b>598</b>	<b>31476</b>	<b>£3352</b>	<b>£9272</b>
<b>Add averages for 59 congrega- tions not included in returns, }</b>	<b>...</b>	<b>...</b>	<b>39165</b>	<b>20591</b>	<b>7729</b>	<b>118</b>	<b>6136</b>	<b>649</b>	<b>1770</b>
<b>General Totals, .....</b>	<b>361</b>	<b>59</b>	<b>261345</b>	<b>126070</b>	<b>£47315</b>	<b>716</b>	<b>37612</b>	<b>£4001</b>	<b>£11042</b>

From the statements in this table, the following conclusions are deduced :—

The average number of persons, young and old, connected with each	
Secession congregation, is	735*
The average number of communicants is	319
The average amount of stipend paid to each minister (exclusive of sacramental expenses), is	£131
The average number of Sabbath schools and classes for religious instruction, connected with each congregation, is within a small fraction of	2
The average number of scholars receiving religious instruction in these schools and classes, in each congregation, is	104
The average amount paid annually to the poor by each session is	£11
The average amount collected by each congregation, for missionary purposes, is	£30†

I shall now lay before the reader, in one view, the whole amount of voluntary contributions collected annually by the congregations of the United Secession Church for the maintenance of gospel ordinances among themselves; for the support of the poor; and for the propagation of the gospel, in destitute districts, at home and abroad; exclusive of occasional congregational collections made for assisting weak congregations, and also for giving aid to public institutions. There is one item which I have not yet noticed, and which it is proper should be taken into the account. This item is the allowance annually made by the greater part, if not the whole, of the congregations for sacramental expenses. As the sum allowed by each congregation for this purpose ranges from five to thirty pounds annually, according to the ability of the congregation, and according to the frequency with which the ordinance of the Lord's Supper is dispensed, I do not estimate this item too high when I make the annual average for each congregation to be ten pounds. The following statement will show the total amount of the various items :—

Annual amount of stipends in the United Secession Church,	£47,315
Annual allowance for the poor,	4,001
Collected for missionary purposes, by congregational associations,	11,042
Annual allowance for sacramental expenses (£10 for each congregation),	3,610
Annual collection for Synod Fund (not included in any of the above items), amount last year,	760
	<u>£66,728</u>

Let us now endeavour to ascertain the amount of property belonging to the United Secession Church, all of which has been created by the voluntary liberality of its members. The number of churches (exclusive of those that have been erected at mission stations), is 361. The number of mansees stated in the returns from 302 congregations (town and country), is 177; and, with regard to the fifty-nine congregations, from which no returns have been made, we may fairly enough suppose that, connected with them, there is an equal proportion of mansees. This will give thirty-four additional, or 211 mansees in whole.

When we consider that a large proportion both of the churches and mansees are new, and also that many of the churches which have been erected of late years, especially in towns, have cost several thousands, it will not be considered too high an average, if we state the value of each Secession church to be one thousand pounds, and the value of each Secession manse to be four hundred pounds.

361 churches, valued at £1,000 each, will give	£361,000
211 mansees valued at £400 each, will give	84,400
	<u>£445,400</u>

\* In most of the averages stated above, there is a fraction more than what the figures express. To avoid the appearance of being unnecessarily minute, I have omitted all the fractions.

† This last item includes chiefly what is collected by congregational missionary associations, and given to various religious and benevolent societies. But the sum does not include those collections that are made occasionally, to assist weak congregations, and for other benevolent purposes.

All this amount of money (nearly half a million sterling), has been expended, in the course of little more than a century, by a religious community, including in it a very small proportion of the wealth of the country, in making provision for the dispensation of religious ordinances, and in the face of great opposition made to them from a variety of quarters. If a comparatively small section of the church has thus been enabled, from the daily earnings of its members, to expend such a large sum of money in rearing edifices in every district of the country, for the worship of God, and in building comfortable manses for its ministers, while, at the same time, it has been contributing liberally every year, not only for the maintenance of a gospel ministry at home, but for the support of missions abroad, what might not have been accomplished by the united efforts of the whole Christian community in this country, had not the energies of the people been repressed by the chilling influence of an establishment, and had they not been systematically taught, from their infancy, that the support of gospel ordinances was a matter in which they had no personal concern!

But then we are told that there is a considerable amount of debt lying on the property of the Secession congregations, and that this is one of the evils connected with the voluntary system of supporting the gospel. I admit that many of the Secession congregations, in common with other dissenting communities, have debt connected with their properties. Still, it is true, that the sums above-mentioned have actually been expended by the people in building churches and manses; and, if they have been obliged to borrow a portion of the money that has been thus expended, this must be regarded as a mere matter of temporary accommodation; because it is not to be expected that when a few individuals, none of whom are probably wealthy, associate together, at first, for the purpose of forming a congregation, they can, all at once, raise from their own resources, a fund sufficiently large for building a church, and it may be a manse additional; and they are therefore obliged, in the mean time, to borrow such a sum as will enable them to complete their undertaking. In a great number of instances, it will be found that this process of borrowing and lending is entirely a matter of accommodation among the members of the congregations themselves, without any foreign party being required to interfere in the business; that is, one or more individuals connected with the congregation, undertake to advance the money necessary for completing the building of a church or manse, for which sum proper security is given by the congregation receiving the accommodation, and a regular interest paid; and the principal is gradually liquidated by successive payments, according to the ability of the congregation, or a portion of the debt is permitted to remain on the property, by the common consent of the parties concerned.

There is nothing in such a transaction as this that militates, in the slightest degree, against the voluntary system; and there is nothing in it which is at all dishonourable to any congregation. It is possible that, owing to unforeseen and unexpected occurrences, congregations may come, in the course of providence, to be placed in circumstances in which they find themselves unable to fulfil the engagements into which they have entered; but instances of this kind will be found to be comparatively few indeed. On the other hand, we have only to point to the numerous churches, and the many comfortable manses, scattered over our land, which have been reared by the voluntary contributions of the people, to show what the power of Christian principle is able to effect, in leading men to procure for themselves and families a pure dispensation of the gospel, and also to propagate it amongst their neighbours. Whatever be the struggles which dissenters have to make for the accomplishment of these objects, it ill becomes churchmen, who are wholly indebted to the bounty of their country for the religious ordinances which they enjoy, to taunt their dissenting brethren with their debt, or with their pecuniary difficulties, seeing that this is a matter with which no foreign party has a right to interfere, and seeing that the circumstances of dissenters, *voluntarily preferring* to struggle with these difficulties, rather than accept of an invitation to join the Establishment, is a convincing proof that they are at least sincere in the profession which they make.

## SUPPLEMENTARY PART,

CONTAINING AN ACCOUNT OF THE LITERATURE AND  
AUTHORS OF THE SECESSION.

### CHAPTER XXII.

Theological Seminary commenced under Mr. Wilson of Perth—Transferred to Abernethy—Mr. Alexander Moncrieff, Professor of Divinity—Philosophical Class commenced at Abernethy—Curriculum of study pursued in it—Divinity Hall at Alloa—Course of study pursued under Mr. William Moncrieff—Professor Bruce and the Hall at Whitburn—Account of the exercises prescribed at Whitburn—Professor Paxton and his system of tuition—Mr. Ebenezer Erskine takes charge of the Students in connection with the Burgher Synod—Succeeded in the Professorship by Mr. James Fisher—Mr. Fisher resigns and is succeeded by Mr. John Swanston—Divinity Hall at Haddington—System of tuition by Professor Brown—Theological Seminary under the Rev. Dr. Lawson of Selkirk—Rev. Dr. Dick elected Professor—Curriculum of study pursued under Dr. Dick—Rev. Dr. Mitchell associated with Dr. Dick in his labours—Course of Theological study greatly enlarged under the United Associate Synod—Mr. Alexander Duncan, Dr. John Brown, and Mr. Robert Balmer elected Professors—Course of study at present pursued in the United Secession Church—Small expense of the Theological Seminary—List of Secession Professors of Divinity—Dates of their appointment.

It is my intention, in this part of the work, to give some account of the literature of the Secession. This requires a supplement, as the miscellaneous particulars contained in it could not well have been interwoven with the main narrative without frequently breaking the continuity of it. I propose here bringing before the mind of the reader at one view the exertions which have been made by the Secession church, at every period of its history, to produce a well-educated ministry. Sufficient evidence has been adduced, in the preceding part of this work, to show the great anxiety manifested by this church that its ministers should be sound in the faith, and that they should be possessed of personal piety. But the statements I am now about to make, will show that it has been no less anxious that those who minister at its altars should be well instructed in the various departments of literature, as well as possess a competent measure of biblical knowledge. I shall trace the changes that have been made at successive periods, in the course of study, with a view to its enlargement and improvement; and shall show, that the course of training, to which the candidates for the holy ministry

have been subjected, has been distinguished in a high degree for its efficiency, and for the happy fruits which have resulted from it. So much has this been the case, that the ministers of the Secession church have occupied at least an equally respectable standing with the ministers of any other church, both as scholars and as theologians. While they have, as a body, maintained the character of being faithful, diligent, and successful labourers in the gospel vineyard, not a few of them have attained considerable eminence in the walks of general literature. They have left behind them productions which will long exist as monuments of their profound research and extensive scholarship.

The first theological seminary connected with the Secession church, was opened at Perth in the spring of 1737. The brethren of the Associate Presbytery were unanimous in placing it under the superintendence of the learned Mr. William Wilson, minister in that town. They left it to himself to prescribe the particular course of study which the young men under his charge were required to pursue. Mr. Wilson employed as his text-book, the *Medulla* of Mark of Leyden. The prelections which he gave to the students were read by him in Latin, and the whole business of his class was conducted in that language. Each session consisted of three months; namely, the months of March, April, and May. The first race of preachers belonging to the Secession, among whom were several distinguished for their scholarship and their pulpit talents, were trained up under him.

After the death of Mr. Wilson, the Divinity Hall was transferred from Perth to Abernethy, by the appointment of Mr. Alexander Moncrieff, in February, 1742, to the professorial chair. For a period of twenty years, this eminent minister conducted the business of the theological class with great ability and success. He had himself, in early life, undergone a thorough course of training for the work of the ministry; having studied philosophy and divinity in the university of St. Andrews, and having afterwards repaired to Leyden, where he prosecuted his theological studies for a year under the celebrated Mark.

In connection with the theological seminary at Abernethy, a class for teaching philosophy was instituted, the charge of which was committed to one of the students of divinity. The object for which this class was instituted was to afford the young men an opportunity of studying philosophy in a school where they would not be exposed to the danger of having their principles corrupted. While a recommendation was given to all the Secession students to attend this class, yet it was not rendered imperative on them to do so, in order to

their being admitted to the study of divinity. Many were enrolled as students in the Divinity Hall, who came direct from the classes of the university. When any person applied for admission into the philosophical class, the presbytery, within whose bounds he resided, were required to subject him to a strict examination with regard to his knowledge of the Latin and Greek languages. They were also to examine him as to his soundness in the faith and his experimental acquaintance with religion; and unless he received a recommendation from the presbytery, after undergoing such examination, he could not be admitted. Each student who entered this class was enjoined to pay the teacher five shillings quarterly; and those who were in more affluent circumstances were required to pay him ten shillings.

For a considerable period, the curriculum of attendance on the philosophical class was limited to two years; but it was afterwards extended to three. The teacher was enjoined to spend a portion of each session in instructing the students in the knowledge of the languages—and during the first year particular attention was paid to the Latin and Greek. It may be proper here to state, that after the disruption of the Associate synod, occasioned by the controversy concerning the burgher oath, the philosophical class was continued in connection only with the Antiburgher synod. The Burgher brethren had no institution of the kind. Every year\* a committee of synod was appointed to examine the students attending this class. Each student was examined as to his knowledge of philosophy, his soundness in the faith, his acquaintance with experimental religion, and his motives in prosecuting his studies: and according as the report of the examining committee was favourable or unfavourable, were the students either admitted to the study of theology, or continued longer in the philosophical class. The course of study pursued by the students while attending the theological seminary at Abernethy, was, so far as I can learn, the same as that which had previously been pursued by the students while the Divinity Hall was under the charge of Mr. Wilson. Mr. Moncrieff adopted, like his predecessor, the *Medulla* of Mark for his text-book.

In February, 1762, the Theological Hall, connected with the Antiburgher synod, was transferred to Alloa, Mr. William Moncrieff, minister in that town, having been elected Professor after the death of his father. For a period of twenty-four years he discharged with much fidelity and acceptance the duties connected with his important office. I

\* This examining committee was afterwards appointed every two years.

am enabled to give from an authentic source a variety of particulars connected with the admission of students to the Divinity Hall, and the exercises that were prescribed to them, while prosecuting their studies under the charge of Mr. William Moncrieff. These particulars have been communicated to me in a letter received from a venerable minister of Christ lately deceased.\*—In this communication the writer says:—"I did not attend the philosophical class under the General synod, but studied at the University of Edinburgh. Of course I can say nothing about the mode in which that class was conducted.—The general mode of admitting students to the Divinity Hall, was by the appointment of a large committee by the synod every two years. When I was examined, there were about thirty students offered themselves. About twenty attended the class under the synod. Six or eight had studied at Edinburgh or Glasgow University. The committee sat sometimes two days. We were examined on Logic, Metaphysics, and Moral Philosophy. So far as I recollect we were not examined on the languages. Then after the public examination, each student was called in alone, and examined on personal religion and his views concerning theological studies. The Professor of course was always in the committee. The time prescribed for the study of divinity was five years: but when the church demanded preachers, some were licensed after four years' attendance.

"Markii Medulla was Mr. Moncrieff's text-book. As to the manner in which the class was managed, I cannot be absolutely certain as to every point. I am not certain if we met on Monday. I think we got four lectures every week, unless there was a great press of discourses. If the students were urgent to deliver, there was sometimes a meeting in the afternoon. I have really forgotten if there was any examination on the system. Once or twice a-week theological difficulties were prescribed to the students in rotation to be answered. The meeting on Saturday was appointed for hearing a lecture on a chapter of the Confession of Faith, and two students were employed in prayer. Each student was called by name to make remarks on the discourse delivered. Nine weeks was the term of the Hall. None were allowed to depart unless they attended six weeks; and the Professor kept a statement of the time which each attended. The exercises prescribed were just such as we now prescribe to young men on trials for licence. Turretine was the system generally recommended to the students. But the Professor's lectures were didactic, and he followed Markius: so did his father, as I have been told."

\* The Rev. Alexander Pringle, D.D., of Perth.

Toward the close of Mr. Moncrieff's professorship, a complaint having been made by the examining committee, that the attendance of the students upon the lectures of the Professor was not so regular as it ought to be, the synod adopted regulations with the view of insuring a more full and punctual attendance upon the divinity class. They declared, that in taking young men on trials for licence, a preference would be given to those who had been most regular in their attendance; and that the Professor should not give a recommendation to any, with a view to their being licensed, unless they had not only attended the full number of sessions, but given a certain amount of attendance each session. It was also recommended to those ministers, who had students connected with their congregations, to become acquainted with them, to assist them in their studies, and to be ready to report to the synod concerning their diligence and general deportment. All students of divinity were enjoined to be exemplary in their conduct, to be diligent in the prosecution of their studies, both during the sessions of the Hall and during the vacations, and also to cultivate acquaintance with those ministers to whose congregations they belonged.

Mr. Archibald Bruce, minister at Whitburn, succeeded Mr. William Moncrieff, as Professor of Divinity, in September, 1786, and continued to occupy the theological chair, in connection with the general Associate synod, until the Old and New Light controversy (as it was termed) occasioned his separation from them in 1806. Mr. Bruce was a man of talents, of piety, and learning. Those who had good opportunities of judging of his attainments, represent him as eminently fitted for discharging the duties connected with the important station he was called upon to occupy. The late Dr. M'Crie, in an address which he delivered to the students after the Professor's death, gave the following character of him,—“For solidity and perspicacity of judgment, joined to a lively imagination,—for profound acquaintance with the system of theology, and with all the branches of knowledge which are subsidiary to it, and which are ornamental as well as useful to the Christian divine,—for the power of patient investigation, of carefully discriminating between truth and error, and of guarding against extremes on the right hand as well as on the left,—and for the talent of recommending truth to the youthful mind by a rich and flowing style,—not to mention the qualities by which his private character was adorned,—Mr. Bruce has been equalled by few, if any, of those who have occupied the chair of divinity, either in late or in former times.”\*

\* Life of Dr. M'Crie, p. 56.

During the period of Mr. Bruce's professorship, new regulations were adopted by the synod, in addition to those which previously existed, with the view of enforcing a greater degree of attention to classical learning, and also to secure for the students the full benefit of the course of study which had formerly been prescribed. Young men, whose views were directed to the office of the ministry, were required to undergo an examination, as to their proficiency in Latin, by the presbytery within whose bounds they resided, before they entered upon their studies at the university. Presbyteries were enjoined to give them directions with regard to the classes which it was necessary for them to attend, and to direct their attention to such books as it might be proper for them to read in the prosecution of their studies. Students in philosophy were to be annually examined either by the presbytery, or by a committee appointed for this purpose; and none were to be received for examination unless they were certified as being in the communion of the church. Those who conducted this examination were required "to have their eye particularly on those dangerous opinions which are taught in our universities." None were to be attested, with a view to their examination in philosophy, unless they had previously been examined in Latin and Greek by the presbytery within whose bounds they resided. When they applied for admission to the Divinity Hall, the presbytery was required to examine them as to their knowledge of these languages, if they had not already given satisfaction in this particular. They underwent an examination, at the same time, on the various branches of philosophy which they had been studying at the university. Each session of the Hall consisted of eight weeks; and if any student did not attend at least five weeks every session, it did not count as one of the years of his curriculum, unless he was able to assign such a reason for his absence as should be regarded satisfactory by the presbytery. All students of divinity were required to deliver at least one discourse every year before the presbytery: and presbyteries were to recommend to them proper books for their perusal, and were to examine them frequently on these books.

The following account of the exercises prescribed to the students, while attending the Divinity Hall at Whitburn, and of the course of lecturing pursued by Professor Bruce, has been received from a highly respected minister of the United Secession Church:—"The students were admitted to the Hall by the Provincial synods after examination, not on the languages, but on mathematics, logic, moral philosophy,

and natural, if they had attended it, also on personal religion. The course of attendance at the Hall was five sessions, with some exceptions in the case of missions or scarcity of preachers. The exercises prescribed to the students were the following ;—first year, an exegesis impugning, and all in Latin, and a lecture on a portion of the Confession of Faith ;—second year, a homily ;—third year, an exercise with additions on some portion of the Greek New Testament ;—fourth year, a lecture ;—fifth year, a popular sermon. There were, besides, some other minor exercises, such as textual difficulties which we were appointed to raise from a chapter, and two appointed to answer ; and also the discussion of some controverted theological points.

“ In the business of the Hall, order was not strictly adhered to, and cannot be well stated. There was generally only one meeting a-day, and the hour of meeting twelve o'clock. The business of each week was as follows. On Monday, a miscellaneous lecture by the Professor. On Tuesday, discourses by the students. On Wednesday, a lecture by the Professor on the system : the system which he used was Markii Medulla. On Thursday, examination on the system. On Friday, discourses by the students. On Saturday, a Confessional lecture, together with conference on some practical subject stated by the Professor. Besides the above labours of the Hall, the students had some exercises among themselves ; especially a debating society, where theological points were discussed. The subject being fixed, two of the first year class were appointed to open the debate, who had the choice of those by whom they were to be assisted,—the orthodox side having the first choice,—and thus the Hall was equally divided, and had the opportunity of exercising their polemical talents. The duration of the session was eight weeks, but attendance was not enforced.

“ Mr. Bruce was in many respects a Professor highly qualified, and by every student greatly venerated ; and his judgment in almost everything, except the magistrate's power, with much deference treated. His examinations and criticisms were very judicious and useful ; and himself very pious and amiable,—and still held in high memorial by all who yet survive of those who attended him. I may, however, be allowed to say, that the system of theological education then adopted was very defective, especially in the work required from the students. The great object should be to make them good operatives both in composition and pulpit ministration. To effect this, they should, during their course of study, have more to compose and to deliver. In this respect there is in the present mode of training, especially by the presbyteries, a decided improvement.”

After Mr. Bruce's connection with the General Associate synod was dissolved, a new arrangement was made with regard to the Theological Seminary. Mr. George Paxton, minister at Kilmaurs, being appointed Professor in April, 1807, his relation to his congregation was dissolved, and he was required to devote his whole time to the important charge which was devolved upon him. The seat of the Divinity Hall was removed to Edinburgh, where Mr. Paxton took up his abode. The following sketch of the method of theological tuition, pursued by Professor Paxton, has been received from one who attended his class.\* The writer of it says—"Its general accuracy may be relied on, as it is derived from my own recollections, corrected by those of two friends—one of them my class-fellow—the other our precursor by some years at the Hall, and intimately connected with the Professor."

"The course of instruction for each student extended through five sessions. The session commenced towards the end of August, and embraced a period of about eight weeks. It was not, however, in all cases imperative on the young men to complete the session, the engagements of a considerable number of them as teachers or otherwise putting this out of their power.

"The business of the session was introduced with a lecture on some general topic, which I remember to have been, in one case, 'The method of conducting theological studies.' For five days in the week we had two meetings daily. One of these was held in an early part of the day. At this meeting, except on Monday and Saturday, the Professor prelected for an hour or so on systematic theology, going over most of 'Markii Medulla,' his text-book, in the course of the five sessions of the Hall. On Monday we read, and were examined on the Greek Testament, after which a critical exposition of some difficult passage of scripture, or sometimes a lecture in the ordinary course, was read from the chair. On Saturday morning we met, much as a family do, for devotional exercises, and not unlike a fellowship-meeting besides for conversation or a practical question, of which I may mention as specimens, 'The example of Christ,' and 'The character required in a minister of the gospel.' We had also a lecture from one of the students on a chapter of the Confession of Faith.—'The other meeting, which was in the afternoon, and prolonged for two hours, or more, according to circumstances, was appropriated to our exercises. The more stated business of this hour was the delivering of discourses, followed by the remarks on them of Professor and students. Five discourses—an exegesis,

\* Rev. James Gilfillan, Stirling.

homily, critical exercise, lecture, and popular sermon, were required of each during his curriculum. But there were other more occasional engagements. We were examined on the morning lectures. Theological difficulties were propounded and solved—both in writing. The theses were impugned; and plans, or as they were called, skeletons, of sermons were read, the Professor pointing out wherein they were faulty or otherwise. Occasionally at this hour, when it happened that one discourse or none was forthcoming, the regular course of lectures was carried on. In addition to that on theology, we had a course (a lecture being given, if I remember rightly, once a-week, and in the afternoon) on the productions, manners, and customs of the East, in so far as they tended to throw light on the Sacred Volume,—the substance of which has been given to the world in the well-known work, ‘Illustrations of the Holy Scriptures.’ Every meeting was opened by the Professor, and concluded by one of the students, with prayer, except on two occasions, that of a visit of a minister, on whom the latter service devolved, and that of the first meeting of the session, when I have seen two of the students called on to officiate at the close.

“It will be observed that there has been no mention of any exercises connected with the Hebrew language. To this important department, indeed, little attention was paid during the sitting of the Hall. But it ought to be remembered that the Professor had a class for this exclusive object in winter.

“Mr. Paxton was distinguished by extensive acquaintance with systematic theology, by no ordinary attainments in general literature, and by that various information which gives a man power, and makes him an attractive and useful companion. He was versant in the original languages of scripture, and possessed considerable familiarity with the sources of critical learning. His command of words and the rapidity of his utterance in preaching and conversation were singularly great. His style, though not always chastened by the purest taste, was remarkable for its clearness, and on subjects of narrative and polemics, for its simplicity. In prayer very few that I have heard have appeared to me to approach him in variety of matter, in copiousness of expression, and in fervour of feeling. His manner in his intercourse with his pupils was somewhat reserved, but those who knew him best were well assured of the warmth of his attachments, and of his readiness to oblige. He was a man of heart, a man of public spirit, evinced by his zeal at once for the purity and for the extension of the faith; above all—and it was this that imparted unction, earnestness, and interest to all his public appearances—he was a man of God.

“That Mr. Paxton was a perfect specimen of a theological

tutor is not affirmed. But taking him all in all, there are few perhaps in our day who have brought so many qualifications to bear on the preparation of young men for the holy ministry. His fervent piety, excellent intellectual powers, abundant stores of knowledge, sound views, and agreeable elocution, combined to inspire his pupils with respect, interest, and confidence. The warm regard which they continued to feel for him, and the honourable manner in which many of them, in various parts of the world, have filled the pastoral office, are the best eulogiums on his worth."

In the preceding statements I have presented the reader with an outline of the history of the theological seminary connected with the Antiburgher section of the Secession church, and have noticed the changes that were made, from time to time, in the course of study prescribed to the young men whose views were directed to the holy ministry. The course of training, to which the theological students connected with the Burgher portion of the Secession were subjected, was somewhat similar. Their Divinity Hall, no less than that of the rival synod, was, from the period of the breach till the reunion, placed under the superintendence of a succession of able, learned, and pious men.

Immediately after the rupture, occasioned by the burgessoath controversy, took place, Mr. Ebenezer Erskine was requested by the Burgher synod to take the charge of the young men, who were prosecuting their studies with a view to the office of the ministry. From any information I have been able to glean, concerning the manner in which Mr. Erskine conducted the business of the Theological class, he did not deliver any formal lectures to the students, but read and commented on Turretine. After having superintended the studies of the young men for two years, he was obliged to resign, on account of bodily infirmity, his important charge. He was succeeded in it by his son-in-law, Mr. James Fisher, minister at Glasgow, who was elected Theological Professor in September, 1749. Mr. Fisher presided over the Theological seminary for a period of fifteen years. I am unable to give any particular account of the course of study, that was pursued by the young men under the professorship of Mr. Fisher. But the profound knowledge of divinity possessed by this eminent minister, his intimate acquaintance with the scriptures, and the energy and zeal which he displayed in his Master's service, leave no room to doubt, that he was in every respect well-qualified for the work of Theological tuition. Some of the most eminent ministers, which the Secession church has produced, were trained under the superintendence of Mr. Fisher.

Mr. Fisher having resigned several years before his death the Divinity chair, on account of the infirmities of age, Mr. John Swanston, minister at Kinross, was appointed Professor in his stead. The text-book which he followed was the *Medulla* of Mark. His professorship was of short duration. He conducted the business of the class only for three sessions. His appointment took place on the 18th of May, 1764, and he died after a short illness on the 12th of June, 1767.

Mr. John Brown of Haddington took charge of the students the year that Mr. Swanston died—though he was not formally elected Professor till the following year. Soon after the appointment of Mr. Brown, the synod, with the view of preventing improper persons from obtaining admission to the study of divinity, renewed an enactment, which had formerly been sanctioned by a deed of the Associate Presbytery, declaring that none should be admitted to the Divinity Hall, without proper certificates from their sessions, approved of by the presbyteries;—and that all candidates for the ministry should be examined, by the presbyteries, on the various branches of literature, and on the distinguishing principles of the gospel;—also concerning their attachment to that particular scheme of doctrine, order of worship, discipline and government, laid down in the authorized standards of the church. In consequence of a petition from the students, the synod adopted measures at this period for forming a theological library, in connection with the Hall at Haddington.

The following account of the manner in which the business of the Theological class was conducted by Professor Brown of Haddington will be perused with interest. It has been transmitted to the writer of this narrative by a venerated father of the Secession church:—“I studied at Haddington under Mr. Brown five years, 1777–8–9–80–81, and was present every year at the first meeting of the Hall, and at the last, with all the intermediate meetings without exception, as far as I can recollect, saving part of one, and the very last from which I was compelled by an order of the presbytery of Perth and Dunfermline, to hurry away, along with two other students, in order to be examined with a view to be taken on trials for licence. The session was of nine weeks’ duration, and only a very urgent reason could *then* be sustained as an excuse for absence.

“At the distance of sixty years, it cannot be supposed that my recollections can be very minute or perhaps very accurate. I do recollect that in ordinary days we had just one meeting, but of considerable length, from ten in the forenoon to twelve

\* Rev. James Peddie, D.D., Edinburgh.

or perhaps even one o'clock. The meeting was begun and ended with prayer, a service which was conducted by the Professor and the students in the order of the roll. It was occupied in an examination on a section or part of a section of the system, which had been composed by the Professor himself, and manuscript copies of which were in the hands of the students, till, to avoid the inconvenience of several students having only one copy for their joint use, it was printed. The text of the system was supported by a profusion of texts of scripture, which the students had to quote *memoriter* as nearly as possible in the precise words.

"Mr. Brown never delivered, during the five years that I attended the Hall, even one lecture on any head of divinity. Any thing that can be called lectures was occasional, and consisted of readings from his own manuscripts, of parts of a large history of the Church of Scotland, of the Secession, &c., and of some dissertations on the subject of toleration, together with papers on pastoral duty, &c., many of which have since been printed.

"Our ordinary meeting was in the forenoon of every day ; but we had a second meeting often to hear discourses by the students, at which the students were called on, in order as they sat, to offer remarks on the discourse, its language, its method and particular expressions, which commonly occupied more time than the discourse that was criticised, and in which the great body of the students took a part. The Professor protected the preacher against unjust or unduly severe censures, and the exercise was found on experience to be profitable to the class.

"Every student had more work to perform than now. A first year's student had only one discourse, a homily of perhaps nearly half an hour's length, the text of which was given him the first day of his appearance, and which he had to compose and deliver within five or six weeks. The second year student had to deliver a lecture on a portion of scripture, and an exercise and additions from a verse in the Old Testament. An exegesis was assigned, but if it could not be got ready, there was permission to defer it to a subsequent year. The third, fourth, and fifth years' students had assigned to them each year three discourses: a lecture on a passage of scripture ; a confessional lecture on one entire chapter of the Confession of Faith, which the student was expected not to commit to memory but to read it from his notes ; and a popular sermon, which was delivered before as many of the people as chose to attend at an afternoon meeting.

"Meetings were held on the afternoons for hearing ser-

mons, a meeting of the students by themselves for disputation, and on the Saturdays for prayer.

"We all loved and revered the teacher. He showed every day the deep interest he took in our welfare. His addresses to us, which were frequent, and especially his farewell addresses at the close of the session, were very impressive; solemnized the giddiest minds among us, and frequently brought the tears from our eyes."

Mr. Brown's professorial labours under the Associate synod were continued for a term of twenty years. He died in the summer of 1787. During the period of his professorship many eminent ministers were trained up—men whose ministerial diligence and fidelity and talents would have rendered them an ornament to any church. The year before Mr. Brown died the synod enacted, that none should be admitted to the study of divinity who had not attended the literary and philosophical classes, in one of the Scottish universities, for a period of at least three years; and presbyteries were enjoined to make inquiry concerning the prudence, as well as concerning the literature and piety, of those who applied for admission to the Divinity Hall.

Mr. George Lawson, minister at Selkirk, succeeded in 1787 Mr. Brown, as Professor of Divinity, in connexion with the Associate synod; and during the long period of thirty-three years presided over the Theological seminary with great honour to himself and great advantage to the church of Christ. He possessed rare attainments for the office which he was called upon to occupy. His biblical knowledge was extensive and profound—his piety was ardent and unaffected—his humility and candour were great—and he possessed a child-like simplicity of manners which gave a charm to every thing that he said and did. The following account of the manner in which Professor Lawson conducted the business of his class is extracted from a memoir of him, which appeared in the *Christian Repository* soon after his death:

"The plan of Dr. Lawson's theological class was simple and judicious. It was his wish that every student, during the period of his attendance at the Hall, should have an opportunity of hearing his whole course of lectures on theoretical and practical divinity. For this purpose, though each session continued only nine weeks, he regularly went over his whole course on the system in five sessions. The students were regularly examined on the subject of the lectures which they had heard,—a practice admirably calculated to secure their attention, and to promote their improvement.

"The Dr. was accustomed also, every session, to make his pupils read with him, and critically analyze a part of the

Holy Scriptures in the original Hebrew and Greek. Pertinent questions were proposed by him, on such occasions, leading, at once, to the formation of the sound critic, and the edifying practical exposition of the divine word. The continued study of the original languages of the Holy Scriptures, and of their criticism, and of the practical use of the sacred volume, were thus strongly recommended. A laudable ambition to excel in these important exercises was excited and kept alive, and, in many cases, led to very valuable results.

“ During the course of his first session of attendance, every student was required to prepare and deliver a homily on a subject assigned him by the Professor; and generally to prepare two, and sometimes three, discourses, each of the other four sessions. All the subjects were assigned at the close of one session, on which discourses were required to be ready for being delivered the session following. Of these discourses, some were lectures, others sermons; some critical and others practical; and one or more of them popular, to be delivered, not only before the Professor and the students, but before all the people who chose to attend.

“ Before delivering his own remarks on these discourses, the Professor gave every student who chose, an opportunity of offering his criticisms on what he had heard. Veneration for the enlightened and liberal tutor was found sufficient, in almost every instance, to prevent hasty and uncandid remarks. Few availed themselves, prematurely, of the privilege; but almost all were zealous in preparing themselves for doing it wisely. It was, generally, by those who had attended for three or four sessions, that observations on the discourses were made. Always kept under proper regulation, by the superintendence of the Professor, this exercise became a source of much improvement among the young men.

“ No time or pains, which might promise to be useful, were spared by the venerable guide of their studies. On Mondays, Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Fridays, he convened his pupils twice a-day, and once on Wednesdays and Saturdays; so that his ordinary sederunts with them, every week, were ten, or ninety in the course of each session. For the most part these sederunts were long; not a scanty hour, but whatever portion of time was requisite for the important object in view was cheerfully bestowed. On those days on which the Professor met only in the forenoon with his students, they either met in the afternoon by themselves, to deliver, hear, and criticise essays on important subjects, for their mutual improvement, or in the evening along with all the Christian people who chose to attend. These public meetings were held six

times during each session; at every such meeting, three of the students, in rotation or by appointment, gave out, each, a psalm or hymn, and prayed; and two others delivered short prepared and practical discourses or addresses. Often the whole, and always a part, of the exercises at these meetings, was connected with the great and most interesting subject of evangelizing the world, by the dissemination of the divine word among all nations, in their vernacular languages, and by the labours of Christian missionaries. As long as his bodily strength enabled him, the Professor attended these meetings, to render them as useful as possible by his presence. He always spoke last himself, on these occasions, and concluded with prayer. These meetings were well-attended and highly useful, it is believed, both to the students and people. They tended to cherish devotion and a missionary spirit in all, and to form the young men for addressing a public audience with ease and readiness.

Every meeting of the Hall was begun and closed with prayer. With great fervour of devotion, the Professor himself opened the first, and closed the last sederunt of each week, and the students, by rotation, opened and closed the other meetings with prayer.

“From this short account, it appears that the meetings, ordinary and extraordinary, of the Professor with his students, each session, were 96. The *average time* devoted to each meeting was probably more, but certainly not less, than an hour and a-half, or 144 hours each of the five sessions of attendance. This, it will be observed, is considerably more than the average time devoted to the public instruction of their pupils, by the theological Professors in the different universities. If we take the average of their sessions at 24 weeks, and their weekly meetings at five, each of an hour's length, the time employed by them in public instruction, each session, will be 120 hours. This, it is known, is more time than is really so employed, and yet it comes considerably short of the time devoted by Dr. Lawson to the instruction of his pupils, in his session of only nine weeks' continuance. If the session was short, it had the advantage of being *wholly* devoted to theological studies. The bell never, as at the universities, broke off any important business unfinished. The students were never called off as tutors, or in any other character, to attend elsewhere to other business, and forget the sacred investigations in which they had been engaged. Teaching schools, or acting as tutors to young gentlemen, is the common, necessary, and in many respects highly useful employment, for the greatest part of the year, of the great majority of theological students, both in the Established church and among dissenters.

This makes it a matter of great importance, and almost of indispensable necessity, that the sessions of the Divinity Hall, in such a body as ours, be short, and that they be held during the harvest vacation of schools and other seminaries of learning.

“Such is a general outline of Dr. Lawson’s mode of conducting the studies of the young men put under his care. There were occasional variations, according to times and circumstances, and to serve important purposes. To this plan, however, so comprehensive, so judiciously adapted to circumstances, and so well-calculated, through the divine blessing, to form his pupils for being able, pious, and useful ministers of Christ, Dr. Lawson adhered, in its substance, for the thirty-three years of his professorship. In pursuing it, the whole circle of human learning was ever at his command. The powers of original and transcendent genius were ever manifest. The most profound discussion became always simple and plain under his management.”

After the death of Dr. Lawson, the theological chair was occupied by a person of distinguished eminence as a scholar, a divine, and a Christian. This was Dr. Dick, minister of Greyfriars congregation, Glasgow. He was elected Professor of divinity by the Associate synod in the month of April, 1820. There have been few men in any church better fitted than this eminent individual to superintend the training of young men for the office of the holy ministry. The extent of his erudition, the admirable precision of his theological views, the polish and vigour of his mind, the correctness of his taste, the elegance of his diction, the dignity of his manner, and his sterling piety, all formed in him a combination of qualities, peculiarly adapted to the efficient discharge of the duties of a theological professor, which are rarely to be met with in any one individual. The lectures which he delivered to the students have been published since his death; and with regard to the sound and satisfactory exposition which they give of the doctrines of the gospel, with regard to the practical nature of the illustrations which they contain, and with regard to the beauty and perspicuity of the language in which they are expressed, they will bear a comparison with the most admired productions on theology, which have appeared in this or any other country. It is impossible to peruse them without being convinced that the mind which gave them birth must have been one of no ordinary stamp.

With regard to the manner in which the business of the theological class was conducted by Dr. Dick, I extract the following account from a memoir of him prefixed to his Lectures on Theology:—

“Previous to the appointment of a Professor of Biblical

Literature, the whole of the students in connection with the United Secession Church (their average number considerably exceeding one hundred) were placed simultaneously under his care; the course of study extended throughout five sessions; each session embracing annually a period of nine weeks. But subsequently his instructions were confined to the students of the last three years.

"The class met twice every lawful day, excepting Saturday, when it met only in the morning, and Wednesday, when the students assembled a second time at the usual hour, but without the presence of the Professor, and, as shall be afterwards explained, for a peculiar object. The usual business of the morning was the hearing and criticising of discourses. Two discourses were delivered in succession by different individuals, after which the Professor, before making any observations of his own, gave the students generally an opportunity of expressing their opinion. This opportunity was at one period eagerly embraced, but for several years before the death of Dr. Dick, although regularly presented, it was almost uniformly allowed to pass unimproved. The practice of declining to make remarks was gradually introduced, but it came to be generally approved of by the class, not only on the ground that they had other opportunities of exercising more unrestrainedly their powers of criticism, but also because the opinion of the Professor was felt to be the only one which the person whose production was criticised was concerned to know, and by which the character of the discourse was finally determined.

"It is not easy for those who were not members of the class to conceive of the deference with which the remarks of Dr. Dick on such occasions were received. This was owing not more to the estimation in which he was held as a person of consummate taste and judgment, than to the sterling honesty by which he was known to be actuated. At such times he seemed to feel that he was discharging a solemn and important duty; and subjecting his feelings entirely to the control of principle, he studied to be faithful alike in awarding praise and inflicting censure. Out of the chair he was the most indulgent of critics, and when induced to give his opinion of any discourse, which as a private individual he had occasion to hear, he uniformly expressed himself in such a manner as indicated that he had been listening with the view, not of detecting faults, but of receiving benefit.

"His observations on discourses delivered in the class-room were comprehensive rather than minute. Occasionally they were of a verbal kind, when they discovered a cultivated taste and an intimate acquaintance with the structure of the Eng-

lish language; but *style* was not what chiefly drew his attention. He evidently recognised the principle, that sound thinking must precede good writing, and that a well-regulated and informed mind will sooner or later, as a necessary consequence, work out for itself an appropriate channel of communication. It was to the matter of a discourse that he turned his attention, to the general plan and arrangement, and to the bearing of particulars on the points to be established. Here his acuteness was universally admired. He at once seized on and pointed out the radical defects of a discourse, and then commonly in a few words gave the meaning, when misapprehended, of the passage prescribed as the text or subject, and an outline of the manner in which the illustration should be conducted.

“The first hour of meeting was usually spent in the manner we have described. Regularly, however, once a-week, and sometimes oftener, an examination on the lectures previously read was held, and occasionally, instead of discourses being delivered, some portions of the Scriptures in the original languages were critically analyzed.

“It was at the second hour of meeting that the lectures on theology were read by the Professor, and it was in the business of this hour that the students took the deepest interest. It was formerly observed, that on Wednesday, the students met without the presence of the Professor. They did so under the character of a theological debating society, which was countenanced by Dr. Dick, and which, indeed, he regarded as intimately connected with the system of education which he conducted. On these occasions a chairman was appointed, who opened the meeting with praise and prayer, after which an essay on a subject previously intimated was read and criticised. Here an ample opportunity for the display of critical acumen was afforded. To this, if time permitted, succeeded a discussion on some doctrinal point, which was sometimes long and warmly maintained, and gave abundant scope to extemporaneous eloquence.

“Besides this society, there was another which contemplated missionary objects. It held a meeting every Friday evening, when, besides the devotional exercises with which it was opened and closed, an address was delivered by some one appointed for the purpose. These were seasons which by many will not soon be forgotten, and tended, in no ordinary degree, to generate and cherish amongst the students a spirit of brotherly affection and ardent piety.

“The session was of short duration, but it should be remembered, as the Doctor himself was accustomed to observe, the term of study did not expire with the season for attending the

class, but was protracted by means of the presbyteries, who took charge of the young men within their bounds, throughout the whole period that intervened between their becoming students of divinity and preachers of the gospel."

For five years after the two Secession synods (Burgher and Antiburgher) were united, Dr. Dick continued to officiate as sole Professor to the United Synod, in consequence of Professor Paxton not acquiescing in the union. But in the month of April, 1825, the synod resolved that the system of theological tuition should be enlarged, and that a second Professor should be appointed. The object of the synod in instituting this new professorship was that the students might have a course of lectures given them on the history, evidence, and interpretation of the sacred books, that they might be subjected to frequent examinations on these subjects, and that a larger portion of their time might be devoted to the critical study of the Scriptures in the original. This important department of theological tuition was placed under the charge of Dr. John Mitchell, minister of Wellington-street congregation, Glasgow. He was elected Professor of Biblical Literature on the 15th of September, 1825. The United Associate synod, having now two Professors connected with their Theological seminary, made the following arrangements with regard to the attendance of the students on each. The first and second years of their course, they were required to attend the lectures of the Professor of Biblical Literature; and the third, fourth, and fifth years, they were required to attend the lectures of the Professor of Systematic Theology. Each session extended to eight weeks, and every student was required to be present at least six weeks of the session, otherwise it did not count as one of the prescribed courses.

This arrangement continued till the death of Dr. Dick in 1833. After that period, the synod resolved on making still farther improvements in the plan of study pursued by the young men attending the Theological seminary. Two new professorships were instituted: one for Exegetical Theology, and another for Pastoral Theology and Ecclesiastical History. In the month of April, 1834, Dr. John Brown, minister of Broughton-place congregation, Edinburgh, was appointed to the first of these professorships; and Mr. Alexander Duncan, minister at Mid-Calder, was appointed to the second. Mr. Robert Balmer,\* minister at Berwick, was at the same time elected Professor of Systematic Theology; while Dr. Mitchell continued, as formerly, to occupy the chair of Biblical Literature. In connexion with these arrangements, new

\* Now Dr. Balmer.

regulations were adopted with the view of enforcing a longer attendance of the students, each session, upon the prelections of the professors, and of securing to them the full benefit of the enlarged scheme of study, which was now sanctioned by the synod.

The course of training which those young men are required to undergo, who are prosecuting their studies with a view to the office of the ministry in the United Secession Church, is as complete as is to be found in any other church. Indeed, there are probably few churches, where it is either so complete or so efficient. The superintendence exercised over the students, during the whole period of their curriculum, is strict. The range of study through which they are conducted by the various Professors whose lectures they attend, is extensive and varied : and the number of years they are required to attend first the university classes, and then the Divinity Hall, allows them ample leisure and opportunity for storing their mind with every species of knowledge fitted to promote their efficiency and respectability as ministers of the gospel. I shall here give an account of the training which every Secession student is required to undergo, before he can receive licence ; and I shall present my readers with a complete view of the working of the enlarged system of tuition, as at present carried on under the four Professors who preside over the Theological seminary of the United Secession Church.

No person is admitted to the study of divinity, in connexion with the United Secession synod, who has not attended one of the Scottish universities for a period of at least three years,—though there are many of the students who attend for a longer period than this. During the time of their attendance at the university, they are required to study the Latin, Greek, and Hebrew languages ; and must also make themselves acquainted with logic, and with moral and natural philosophy. When a young man has completed his term of study at the university, application is made in his name to the presbytery, within whose bounds he resides, with a view to his being admitted to the Divinity Hall. Before his application can be received, certification must be made to the presbytery that he is in communion with the church. On a day appointed, he appears before the presbytery, and is subjected to an examination on the languages, and on the branches of literature now mentioned. On Latin, he is examined in Sallust, Virgil, Horace, or any of the other classics. On Greek, he is examined in the Greek Testament, *ad aper-turam libri*. On Hebrew, he is examined in one or two chapters of the historical books of the Old Testament, or in some of the Psalms ; also with regard to his knowledge of the

**Hebrew Grammar.** He is required to give an account of the systems of logic and of moral philosophy which he studied, while attending the university. With regard to natural philosophy, a discretionary power is given to the student to attend this class, either before he is admitted to the Divinity Hall, or—should this not be convenient for him—immediately after his first session at the Hall; and before receiving licence, he must not only undergo an examination on this department of philosophy, but it must be certified to the presbytery that he has attended the class at the prescribed time. Before being permitted to enter upon the study of divinity, the person making application is further examined with regard to his personal piety, and his motives in seeking to be invested with the sacred office.

The course of study at the Divinity Hall extends to *five* sessions—each of them of eight weeks' duration. Should any student absent himself from the Hall, during any one session, before the eight weeks are completed, he must attend another session, to make up for the one during which he has been deficient; or a sufficient reason must be given to the synod, to account for his absence, in order to warrant a particular exception being made in his favour, before he can receive licence. Each session of the Hall commences on the first Wednesday of August, and concludes with the last week of September. Its meetings are held, every alternate year, in Edinburgh and Glasgow. During the first and second years of the course, the students are under the superintendence of the Professors of Biblical literature and Exegetical Theology: during the third, fourth, and fifth years, they are under the superintendence of the Professors of systematic and pastoral theology. The following is an account of the manner in which the business of each class is conducted, of the exercises that are prescribed to the students, and of the subjects that are treated of in the various lectures that are delivered by the Professors, during the sessions of the Hall.

**I. Class. *Biblical Literature.*** Dr. Mitchell, Professor. The students who attend this class have a complete course of lectures given them, on the history, evidences, and interpretation of the sacred volume, also on sacred geography and chronology. A portion of the course is devoted to lectures on the history of the Christian church. The time devoted to the business of the class, during each day of the session, is rather more than two hours. The class assembles at 10 in the forenoon; and with the exception of the meeting on Monday, when the Professor himself officiates, all the meetings are opened with prayer by the students, who officiate in rotation. The first hour is spent in reading Hebrew and

Greek, and in analyzing the passages that are read. A considerable number of chapters and psalms from the Old Testament, as well as certain sections of most of the books of the New, are in this way perused and critically examined during every session. After a short interval, the class again assembles, when a lecture is delivered according to the order of the course; and an examination is instituted, usually after every third lecture. At this second meeting a discourse is delivered by one of the students on a subject which had been prescribed at the close of the preceding session. Remarks are made by the Professor, and occasionally by one or more of the students, on the discourse that is thus delivered. About eight or ten topics for essays, usually digested into a train, and embracing views that are conceived to be appropriate and useful, are prescribed to exercise the minds of the students, to try their talents, and to habituate them to composition. These, with some supplementary lectures, containing instructions as to style, the composition of discourses, and the study of the sacred languages, &c. are intended to fill up the intervals, which occasionally occur before the time allotted to the business of the class expires. Each session is closed with a brief recapitulation of the business of the class which has been gone through, together with some directions relative to the prosecution of their studies, and exhortations to a diligent improvement of time during the long recess.

II. Class. *Exegetical Theology*. Dr. Brown, Professor. The course of lectures delivered in this class includes, in the New Testament, a considerably minute critical exposition of our Lord's discourses—his sermon on the mount—his discourse with Nicodemus—the other discourses recorded by John—a selection of the parables, &c. &c.—the epistles to the Romans, Galatians, and Hebrews. For the Old Testament—lectures are given on the history of the creation, and of the fall of man—a selection of the Messianic psalms, (ii. xvi. xviii. and cx.)—and also of the Messianic prophecies of Isaiah. (chap. xi. lii. liii. &c.) The Professor of this class is desirous to enlarge his course by adding to it an exposition of the more important narratives in the Acts of the Apostles, and a general view of the prophecies of the New Testament, as well as by giving a more extended view of the Messianic predictions in the Old Testament: but finds that, were he to do so, it could not be completed within the limited period of two sessions.

The time devoted to the business of the class each day, with the exception of Saturday, is from two and a-half to three hours. This time is nearly equally divided between lecturing, and hearing and criticising exegetical exercises. These exercises—one of which is required each session from every

student—are expected to be pieces of strict exegesis ; a clear exposition of the words, phrases, and sentiments of the passage, with a statement of the reasons on which the exposition is founded. The students are required to deliver the discourses *memoriter*. They are invited to criticise each other, but seldom accept the invitation. Subjects of discourses are generally given them in a regular series, so that the Professor in his critiques is enabled to expound a portion more of holy writ. The Professor has not been able to do so much, in the way of examinations, as he could wish. He thinks it better to give the *bona fide* diligent student all possible means of improvement—even at the risk of some triflers making less proficiency, than they would be compelled to do if subjected to examination. The students generally take a deep interest in the subjects pressed on their attention. Some of them, however, have expressed an opinion, that they would have derived a greater benefit from the exegetical class, if they had been longer in entering it ; as the lectures delivered by the Professor, especially on the Old Testament, require, in order to their being thoroughly understood, a degree of previous attainment in sacred literature which many of them have not made.

III. Class. *Systematic Theology*. Dr. Balmer, Professor. This class meets twice every day of the week, with the exception of Saturday, when it meets only once. The time occupied at each meeting is generally a little more than an hour,—extending occasionally to an hour and a-half. At the first meeting, one of the students delivers a discourse, which, with the criticisms made on it by two or three students, and the Professor's own observations, usually occupies from thirty to forty minutes. About forty minutes more are generally spent by the Professor in reading a lecture on Systematic Theology. The business of the second meeting is somewhat more varied. Two days of the week, on an average, the time is devoted wholly to the business of examination : two days, it is divided between that exercise and hearing discourses or essays ; and on the remaining day, the Professor commences with an examination, and concludes with a lecture on some subject of a miscellaneous nature. Each meeting is opened and closed with prayer, which exercise is performed by the students in rotation, with the exception of the first and last meeting of every week, when the Professor officiates himself. On the Saturday, only one meeting is held ; and it is appropriated almost exclusively to devotional exercises. But for the sake of variety, there is read occasionally an essay or address on some devotional or practical subject either by the Professor, or by one of the students.

At the commencement of each session, every student is furnished with a plan of the whole course of lectures, of which the following is an outline.

#### PART I.

Evidences of Revelation. Preliminary inquiry into the principles of natural religion assumed as the basis of these evidences. Evidences external—internal—miscellaneous. Objections. Inspiration. Other supplementary topics.

#### PART II.

Doctrines of Revelation, which are either of a miscellaneous character, or which may be regarded as preparatory to the scheme of redemption. The nature and attributes of God. The Trinity. Divinity of Christ. Personality and Divinity of the Holy Spirit. The decrees of God. Creation. Providence. Fall of man and its consequences.

#### PART III.

Work of the Redeemer. His sacrifice. Other operations necessary to carry the designs of his sacrifice into effect.

#### PART IV.

Blessings of redemption. Introductory topics. Work of the Spirit. Faith, &c. 1. Justification. 2. Sanctification. 3. Other blessings conferred in the present life,—at death,—and at the resurrection. Appendix on the final state of those who reject these blessings.

#### PART V.

Christian Morals. 1. Doctrinal and speculative questions relating to the grounds of moral obligation, the rule of duty, &c. 2. Practical duties. Our duty to God: to our fellow-men: to ourselves.

In reference to the plan now mentioned, Dr. Balmer, in a communication addressed to the writer of these pages, says:—  
“As the students of the senior division of the Hall attend the Professors three sessions, I endeavour to get through the course in that time. It may be right, however, to observe that there are some of the topics specified in the above sketch, which I have not yet been able to discuss in the lectures, except in a very meagre and perfunctory manner: and it is right to remark farther, that as I rely chiefly on the examinations as the medium of imparting to the students an extended and accurate knowledge of divinity, I do not allot in the lectures that space to each subject which its importance may demand. Some subjects of inferior moment I discuss at considerable length, either because I have ideas to communicate on them,



which seem to myself new or valuable ; while others far more important I discuss but briefly, because I can refer to books in which ample justice is already done to them. Various topics and questions not falling naturally under any of the divisions of the foregoing plan, I consider in the miscellaneous lectures delivered usually at the second meeting on the Wednesday.

“ To the examinations (adds the Professor) nearly as much time is allotted as to the lectures ; and, if I mistake not, the students find them to be the most interesting and improving department of our labours. They are conducted with the design of compensating in some measure for the omissions and deficiencies of the lectures ; and therefore, instead of insisting on the topics considered in the latter, I direct attention chiefly to other topics, and to new proofs and illustrations. Hitherto the lectures of my illustrious predecessor have been employed as a sort of text-book in our examinations ; and of course all the class are required to read carefully what he has written on the subjects which come under our consideration. Occasionally other books are used for this purpose. Thus, for instance, Edwards’ Sermon on Justification is required to be studied, as the groundwork of examination on that doctrine. In reference to this part of our exercises, I have only to add, that, with the view of inspiring and stimulating a passion for reading and inquiry, I am accustomed to characterize the best books which I have read on the various subjects ; pointing out at considerable length their principal excellences and blemishes.”

It is made imperative on every student in this class to deliver at least one discourse each session. The students of the third and fifth years deliver popular sermons, which are received by Professor Balmer. Those of the fourth year deliver lectures or expository discourses, which are received by Professor Duncan. During the last seven years, the number of students in the senior division has ranged from seventy to ninety ; so that Professor Balmer has had to hear from fifty to sixty discourses each session. In addition to the discourses, which are required as indispensable, topics are given out as subjects of optional essays ; of these, a few are generally given by the students each session. Though it does not properly belong to Professor Balmer’s department, he occasionally analyzes with the class a chapter in the Hebrew Bible or the Greek New Testament ; selecting generally a passage bearing on the subject of lecture, or on the character and duties of the Christian minister.

IV. Class. *Pastoral Theology and Ecclesiastical History.* Rev. Alexander Duncan, Professor. The lectures delivered in this class are arranged under three divisions, intended for the several sessions of the course.

The first division relates to the method of ascertaining the mind of the Spirit, or discovering the truth to be presented and urged by the minister of the gospel in discharging his office. This department is subdivided into, 1st, a statement and illustration of the rules to be observed with regard to the manner of the record; 2d, a survey of the manner in which the revelation recorded was given. The last comprises lectures on the great subject of revelation, the purpose of God in regard to our world, particularly the restoration of the fallen;—the character of the Saviour;—the divine economy or arrangement among the persons of the Godhead;—the everlasting covenant between the Father, on the part of Deity, and the Son as the representative of those to be saved;—the province of the Spirit, and his work in relation to Christ, the chosen, the church, and the world;—the process of development;—the first oracle of mercy;—the transaction with Noah;—the more special prospective transactions;—the covenant of promise; the Sinaitic covenant; and the covenant of royalty;—the terms *Berith* and *Diatheke*;—the meaning of the phrases *The Promise*, *The Law*, and *The Gospel*;—the verification of the New Testament order of things;—the design of the Epistle to the Romans, of Gal. iii. 4, of the Epistle to the Hebrews, and of 2 Cor. iii. with the meaning of the phrases *The Letter* and *The Spirit*.

The second division gives views of the mode of ministerially exhibiting the mind of the Spirit, or proclaiming and inculcating the truth. It comprises lectures on the *Exposition* of the scriptures, its history, warrants, and different forms,—and lectures on which is distinctively called *Preaching*, stated or missionary; on the structure and delivery of sermons; on the different kinds of sermons,—sentimental, didactic, catechetical, &c.; on the great object of public ministrations; on the universal call of the gospel, and its consistency with particular election; on the warrant of faith, &c.

The third division embraces other ordinances founded on the system of revealed truth, intended to be also its organs, and subservient to the full accomplishment of its ends. After two preliminary lectures on the original institution, and the perpetuity of the Sabbath, as the season set apart to religious service, others are given on the following subjects,—the prayers of the church, with an estimate of liturgical service in general;—the psalmody of the church;—the sacraments of the church;—the government of the church;—the order of the church, including unity in confession;—communion;—the rights of the people, as church members;—the ordination of office-bearers, and the forms of discipline;—next the superintendence of the church, including catechising,

visitation of families, visitation of the sick, counsel as to the *morale* in difficult cases of a secular nature, in cases of conscience, and in cases of temptation or mental distress; lastly, private intercourse.

The business of this class is conducted in the following manner:—The class meets twice every day, with the exception of Saturday. Each meeting is opened and concluded with prayer, which exercise is conducted by the students in rotation, except at the commencement and close of the week, when the Professor leads the devotions of the class. The first hour of meeting each day—from 11 to 12, noon—is devoted to the lectures on pastoral theology, with the exception of Monday, which is reserved for such readings from the Hebrew and Greek Scriptures as relate to pastoral duties. The second hour—from half-past 1 in the afternoon—is devoted to examinations, to the hearing of discourses, and to ecclesiastical history. Critical exercises are read by students of the third year: lectures are delivered by those of the fourth; and essays on subjects connected with ecclesiastical history are read by those of the fifth year.

With regard to the department of ecclesiastical history, the Professor does not give lectures in the form of a regular narrative, but selects a number of important subjects, both in sacred and uninspired history, sufficient to occupy the three sessions, intermingled with critiques on certain celebrated works in present or past times. These, with occasional variations, are assigned to the students of the fifth year as subjects of essays to be carefully prepared during the recess, and read for the information of the whole class. A few prelections only are given by the Professor, suited to the commencement of each session, on such topics as the following:—The utility of church history,—the beauties, the peculiar character, and the uses of sacred history,—the importance of the gospels,—the design of the book of the Acts,—the heresies of the primitive age,—the chief ecclesiastical histories,—and the different modes of arrangement adopted, &c.

Such is the course of study which the students in connection with the United Secession Church have to undergo, before they are licensed to preach the gospel,—a course probably more varied and extensive than is to be found in any other church of the present day. During the period that the young men are prosecuting the study of divinity, they are under the superintendence of the presbyteries within whose bounds they reside; and, in addition to the prelections of the Professors, and the various exercises prescribed to them while attending the Hall, they are obliged to deliver at least one discourse every year before the presbytery, and are subjected

to an annual examination on some branch of theology, which they are required to make the subject of their reading. The writer of this narrative is not able to say whether all the presbyteries of the association impose the same amount of labour on the students under their charge during the vacations of the hall. He shall here state, as a specimen, what those exercises are, which are prescribed to the young men, by the presbytery of which he is a member.\* In addition to a critical essay, or lecture, or popular discourse, which every student is required to deliver once a-year in presence of the presbytery, (or of a committee of the presbytery,) all the students have to undergo an examination twice a-year before the presbytery. One of these examinations is on church history, and the other is on controversial or practical theology. The history of the Christian church is divided into four portions. The students are required to make one of these portions the subject of their reading every year; and at a meeting of the presbytery, held in spring, they are subjected to a strict examination on the portion which they have thus read: so that by the time the student has completed his theological curriculum, he has been obliged to read, and has been carefully examined on, the whole history of the church. With regard to the other examination now mentioned, namely, that on theology, certain books are pointed out to him, which he is required to read;—the first year on the Deistical controversy,—the second year on the Arminian controversy,—the third year on the Socinian controversy,—and the fourth year on practical and experimental religion. All the students have to attend a meeting of presbytery, held in summer, for the purpose of being examined on these subjects, according to the order now mentioned. Both of these examinations are conducted by two of the brethren, who have been appointed at a previous meeting of presbytery for this purpose.

After the students have completed their course of study at the theological seminary, the synod appoints them, on the recommendation of the presbyteries within whose bounds they reside, to be taken on trials for licence. When they appear before the presbytery, with a view to be taken on trials, they are subjected to an examination on the system of divinity; and then the usual trial discourses are prescribed to them. These consist of a homily, a lecture, an exercise with additions, a thesis on some controverted point of divinity, and a popular sermon, as it is termed. These are delivered in succession before the presbytery; and after remarks have been made by the brethren, who sit in judgment on their merits,

\* The presbytery of Stirling and Falkirk.

a vote is stated in reference to each,—“sustain, or not?” If the discourse is approved of by the presbytery, they vote, “sustain;”—and if it is not approved of, they vote “not to sustain.” When any trial discourse is rejected, another is prescribed, until the presbytery are satisfied. In addition to these probationary discourses, the young men, before receiving licence, are examined on their knowledge of the Hebrew and Greek Scriptures; also on a portion of church history. Should the result of the whole trials be, that the presbytery are not satisfied with the talents, or learning, or orthodoxy, or piety of the student, he is refused a licence. On the other hand, should the trials prove satisfactory, the questions of the formula are proposed to him, and solemn prayer is offered up, after which he is licensed by the moderator, (as the mouth of the presbytery,) in the name of the Lord Jesus, to preach the everlasting gospel, and suitable exhortations are addressed to him.

After receiving licence, his name is enrolled as one of the probationers of the Secession Church; and his regular employment is that of preaching the gospel, under the superintendence of the synod, in the various congregations connected with the association, that are destitute of a fixed ministry. According to a scheme of appointments drawn out by a committee of synod, every probationer has an opportunity afforded him of preaching in the vacant congregations, who thus have it in their power to judge of his talents and qualifications as a preacher; and should they be pleased with his gifts and his aptness to teach, they adopt the ordinary steps required by the rules of the church, with the view of calling him to be their minister. Should he accept of the call that is given, the presbytery, within whose bounds the congregation giving the call is placed, prescribe to him a series of probationary exercises, exactly similar to those mentioned above, all of which must be completed by him in a manner entirely satisfactory to the presbytery, before they ordain him to the office of the ministry.

From the details now given of the successive improvements that have been made in the system of theological tuition adopted by the Secession Church, the reader will perceive the laudable anxiety which that church has ever manifested to train up for the work of the ministry men, who, while they are distinguished for their ministerial faithfulness and their personal piety, should at the same time be respectable for their literary attainments. The long period of eight, and in many cases nine years, is required to be devoted to the study of the languages, of philosophy, and of divinity, before the candidate for the holy ministry can receive licence to preach.

the gospel. The last five years of this period, he is engaged, according to the present system, in studying the various branches of theological literature under four Professors—all of whom occupy a high standing both as scholars and as divines; and the thorough mental discipline to which the student is subjected by the variety of exercises in which he engages while attending the Hall, as well as by the labour which he is required to perform under the superintendence of the presbyteries, during the long vacations, is eminently fitted to inspire him with the love of knowledge, to enrich his mind, to produce in him a habit of patient investigation, and ultimately to render him ‘a workman that needeth not to be ashamed.’

The small expense at which the Theological Seminary of the United Secession Church is conducted, will be a matter of surprise to many—and will be regarded by some as savouring too much of parsimony. The labours of the four Professors may be considered as *gratuitous*: for though the sum of fifty pounds annually is allotted to each, it is not given as a salary, but to defray necessary charges; and it will be found barely sufficient for the purpose, when we take into the account that two of the Professors have to leave their home every year, for a period of two months, to attend the sessions of the Hall—and that the other two have to leave their home, every alternate year, for a similar purpose. Besides the two hundred pounds thus given to defray the expenses of the Professors, the only other item of expense is that incurred by supplying the pulpits of the Professors, during the period they are engaged in teaching the students, which amounts to the sum of about thirty-five pounds annually; so that the whole expense of the Theological Seminary, each year, is not more than two hundred and thirty-five pounds. But of this sum, more than one-half is defrayed by the students themselves. Each student is required to pay one guinea every session. The average number of students attending the Divinity Hall may be estimated at one hundred and forty: and if all the fees were received, the sum would amount to one hundred and forty-seven pounds. But I observe from the printed accounts, that, comparing one year with another, the average amount of fees actually paid is somewhere about one hundred and twenty-three pounds. This leaves a balance of one hundred and twelve pounds to be defrayed out of the general fund of the association: and this is the *whole cost*, to the United Secession Church, of a Theological Institution superintended by four Professors, and at which no fewer than one hundred and forty students, on an average, are receiving a thorough course of training for the office of the holy minis-

try. The annual cost of each student *to the church* is exactly *sixteen shillings*! In these times of economy, when the cry for cheap institutions has become all but universal, it will be difficult to find, either in Europe or America, a similar institution maintained at so small expense, and at the same time with so much efficiency, as the Theological Seminary of the United Secession Church. Should there be any individual, connected with that church, who grumbles at the paltry sum paid out of the common fund, for the maintenance of such an institution, he is but ill deserving of the benefits which he enjoys. I have only further to add, that in consequence of arrangements lately made (and now carried into effect) for uniting three libraries\* into one, the students attending the Divinity Hall of the Secession will henceforward enjoy the benefit of an extensive and valuable library, containing in it a well-assorted collection of books—ancient and modern—on all the branches of theology, and also of general literature.

It will form an appropriate conclusion to the account which I have given of the progress of Theological tuition in the Secession Church, if I shall here place upon the same page the names of those distinguished men, who have occupied in succession the theological chair in connection with that church, that the reader may see at one glance the date of their appointment, and the duration of their professorship:—

Rev. W. Wilson, appointed Profes.	5th Nov. 1736,	Died	8th Oct. 1741
Rev. Alex. Moncrieff, .....	... Feb. 1742,	...	7th Oct. 1761

The following were appointed by the Antiburgher Synod:

Rev. Wm. Moncrieff, .....	10th Feb. 1762,	Died	4th Aug. 1786
Rev. Arch. Bruce, .....	... Sept. 1786,	Deposed	... Oct. 1806
Rev. George Paxton, D.D., .....	30th April 1807,	Resigned	... Dec. 1820

The following were appointed by the Burgher Synod:

Rev. Eben. Erskine, .....	... Sept. 1747,	Resigned	... Sept. 1749
Rev. James Fisher, .....	... 7th Sept. 1749,	...	... May 1764
Rev. John Swanston, .....	18th May, 1764,	Died	12th June 1767
Rev. John Brown, .....	5th May, 1768,	...	19th June 1787
Rev. George Lawson, D.D., .....	... Sept. 1787,	...	21st Feb. 1820
Rev. John Dick, D.D., .....	27th April, 1820,	...	25th Jan. 1833

The following were appointed by the United Synod:

Rev. John Mitchell, D.D., .....	15th Sept. 1825,	} Present Professors.
Rev. John Brown, D.D., .....	13th April 1834,	
Rev. Alex. Duncan, .....	18th April 1834,	
Rev. Robert Balmer, D.D., .....	13th April 1834,	

\* The libraries that have been united are the Robertsonian library, Glasgow, which was purchased by the United Synod for £800; and the libraries that belonged to the Burgher and Antiburgher Synods previous to their being united.

From the above account, the readers of this narrative will be enabled to form some idea of the kind of training which those who are aspiring to the sacred ministry, in connexion with the Secession Church, are obliged to undergo, in order to qualify them for the duties of that important office. I shall now give a full and connected view of the literature of the Secession, by noticing the authors that have appeared in the Secession Church, by enumerating their publications, and by giving short biographical sketches of those ministers (now gathered to their fathers) who have been distinguished for their learning, their authorship, their eloquence, or their public spirit. In giving these notices of Secession authors, and their publications, I shall follow, as nearly as I can, the chronological order, commencing with the Fathers of the Secession, and bringing the survey down to the present period.

## CHAPTER XXIII.

Notices of Secession authors—Ebenezer Erskine—William Wilson—Alexander Moncrieff—James Fisher—Ralph Erskine—Adam Gib—John Swanston—Andrew Swanston—John Brown, Haddington—Michael Bruce—Andrew Moir—George Lawson, D.D.—William M'Ewen.

AT the period when the Secession commenced, literature was not much cultivated in Scotland. The poverty of the people and the state of the times were unfavourable to the cultivation of it. Books on general literature were comparatively rare; and even though they had been much more plentiful than they were, the taste of the people did not incline them to the perusal of such publications. The pulpit was the chief arena of discussion in those days. The benefits of the press were neither so well understood nor so highly appreciated then as they are now. Theological discussion of some kind or another—chiefly connected with controversial subjects—formed the staple commodity of that period. Though the scholarship of the Scottish clergy was respectable, they could not be said, as a body, to possess either extensive or varied literary attainments. Their time and attention were too much occupied with the peculiar business of their calling, and with the religious controversies of the day, for them to have much leisure to attend to anything else. Their style of writing—like their style of preaching—was homely. As religious subjects were those which chiefly occupied their attention, so when addressing their fellow-men, either in the pulpit or from the press, they were desirous to instruct rather than to please. With the elegancies of language they were in a great measure unacquainted, and they seem to have cared as little about them. They were not so ambitious of the honour of being reckoned fine writers, as of being accounted useful instructors.

For the first Seceding ministers I do not claim the praise of being what are called *literary* men. To this they themselves made no pretensions. But I claim for them—what no one who is acquainted with their history will deny them—the possession of an equal degree of scholarship with the most respectable ministers belonging at that period to the Scottish church. They had received an excellent education. Their natural talents were of a superior order; and they had made considerable attainments in those branches of learning, the acquisition of which was considered necessary to the successful discharge of the duties of their office. Whether they entered

the lists of controversy against their numerous antagonists, or vindicated the right of the people in the church courts, or pled their Master's cause in the pulpit—they showed a degree of learning, a copiousness of language, a felicity of expression, and a power of argument, which, if they did not always produce conviction, at least commanded respect—and entitled them to occupy a high place, both as scholars and divines, amongst the ministers of that generation. I shall now present my readers with some account of the lives and writings of these eminent men; and shall afterwards notice those other ministers of the Secession who, on account of their publications or their eminence in the church, deserve to have honourable mention made of them in this record.

REV. EBENEZER ERSKINE, A.M., STIRLING

The name of this distinguished minister deserves to be placed first on the list of Secession authors—not because he is either the most eminent or the most voluminous author that the Secession Church has produced—but because to him, under providence, the Secession itself owes its existence. He was born on the 22d June, 1680. The place of his birth is not altogether certain. By some it is affirmed that he was born in the prison of the Bass rock, situated near the mouth of the Firth of Forth. But his biographer—the Rev. Dr. Fraser of Kennoway—whose accuracy and research entitle his opinion to great weight, states it, as most probable, that he was born at Dryburgh on the banks of the Tweed. His father was the Rev. Henry Erskine, one of the two thousand ministers who were ejected from their charges in England, 24th August, 1662, by the famous Act of Uniformity. Previous to the passing of this act, he was minister of the chapel of Cornhill on the English borders, from which he was ejected. This good man lived to see the memorable Revolution of 1688; and after that event he became minister of the parish of Chirnside, where he finished his earthly course. Mr. Erskine's mother was Margaret Halcro, a descendant of a noble family in Orkney, and a person no less eminent for her piety than she was illustrious by her descent.

After receiving the elements of a classical education, under the superintendence of his father, Mr. Erskine became a student in the university of Edinburgh, November, 1693. Here he prosecuted his studies for a period of nine years—four of which were devoted to the study of the languages and philosophy, and five to the study of theology. Before he had completed his academical course, he was for some time chaplain and tutor in the family of John, Earl of Rothes. On the 11th of

February, 1703, he was licensed by the presbytery to preach the gospel; and immediately after his received appointments from the same presbytery to some vacant parishes within their bounds. His first as a preacher was in the church of Dysart. Soon he preached three several sabbaths at Portmoak—where were so highly pleased with his ministrations, that a call was given him to become the minister of that

After the usual probationary exercises had been to him, and completed to the entire satisfaction of tery, he was ordained at Portmoak on the 22d of 1703. A few months after his ordination, he was Miss Alison Turpie, daughter to Mr. Alexander writer in Leven, Fifeshire. His connexion with lent woman was blessed to him in more ways than he was settled at Portmoak, he was a stranger to of divine truth. He had no experimental acquaintance the gospel which he preached. To the partner of belongs the honour of having been the instrument hand of God of bringing him to the knowledge of This fact was recorded by him, in his diary, in the following terms:—"I bless thee with my soul, for the loan that thou gavest me of my dear wife. When I brought her to me, thou gavest me a help-meet for me in that when I little minded to seek thy counsel about But the Lord chose well for me, and led me in I knew not, and made her a happy instrument not only in bringing my family, and planting it with young olives, much good and edification to my soul, she being the dear and dear mean and instrument of my being brought to acquaintance with religion."

The parish of Portmoak enjoyed the benefit of Mr. Erskine's labours for a period of twenty-eight years. The which he made for the spiritual improvement of his parishioners were most abundant, as well as eminently successful. His preaching was instant in season and out of season amongst the people. His preaching was blessed for the conversion of many in a faithful, affectionate, and zealous manner, in which he discharged the duties of his ministry, he gained the respect and commanded the respect both of young and old. His preaching was crowded upon the Sabbath; and when he assisted at the annual meetings, on mental occasions, in the neighbouring parishes, he was the object of great attraction to the people. His popularity as a preacher, drew strangers from a great distance to Portmoak. It was no unusual thing for persons to travel sixty miles, for the purpose of attending the celebration of the communion at Portmoak.

Though Mr. Erskine, during the period of his ministry at Portmoak, was favoured with as large a share of ministerial success and enjoyed as large a measure of domestic comfort as falls to the lot of most ministers, yet his christian fortitude and resignation were occasionally put to severe trials. The hand of God repeatedly was laid upon him in the form of severe affliction; and death made sad havoc in his domestic circle. During the year 1713, he sustained a rapid succession of distressing bereavements. In the short period of three months, three of his sons were snatched from him at an early period of life. Ralph, the first who died, was in the 2d year of his age: Henry, who next departed, was in his 9th year. And in less than a fortnight, he was followed by his brother Alexander, at the age of five. The unexpected removal of so many of his children, at such brief intervals from each other, inflicted a deep wound on the heart of the good man.

The truly christian exercise of his mind, under these repeated strokes, may be learned from the following notice which he takes, in his diary, of the death of the last-mentioned of his sons:—"Upon the 20th day of June, being Saturday, about 4 in the morning, the Lord was pleased to take away from me another pleasant pledge, a child of five years of age, his name Alexander. My affections were exceedingly knit to him, and I was comforting myself in having him, after his brother Henry's death; but it seems the Lord will not allow me to settle my affections on anything here below. I cannot express the grief of my heart for the loss of this child, the other two strokes being so late. I thought I got faith exercised upon that word of Christ, 'Suffer little children to come unto me, and forbid them not; for of such is the kingdom of heaven.' The Lord inclined my heart to bring my sweet child unto him, and I could not allow myself to doubt but he would accept of him. The Lord make me content with his dispensations, and give me the sanctified use of these repeated breaches that he has made upon my poor family. I hope to be gathered unto Christ with my little ones ere long. I have had a sore parting; but they and I, I hope, shall have a joyful meeting. They will welcome me to those mansions of glory above; and they and I, with all the ransomed on Mount Zion, will join in an eternal hymn and hallelujah of praise unto him that sitteth on the throne, and to the Lamb for ever and ever."

However distressing these trials were to him, a still severer one awaited him in the loss of his beloved partner. After a protracted period of affliction, she left him for a better world, in the month of August, 1720. She was a person distinguished for her good sense, and eminent for her piety; and proved

in every respect a blessing to him. "She was so (says) and circumspect in her walk, that I was not ashamed of myself, when I compared myself with her. She had an extraordinary sagacity, I remember, in discerning the stamp and image of God on any she conversed with. She did exceedingly endear them to her." To her counsel and example he attributed his first serious impressions of religious things. In a letter addressed to his sister, after the death of his wife, he says, "It is a matter of praise that she was to me her not only an instrument in building my family and in strengthening my body, but, I hope, a sweet instrument in bringing me to an acquaintance with Christ and religion; the Lord's dealing with her, I mean the deep exercises of her soul, the desirable issue of them, being blessed of the Lord, was to me also. It was in the time of the Lord's working with her that he was pleased, as I would have thought, to reveal his Son in me; so that it will be eternal matter of praise that ever the Lord gave her to me. If I were as I am now, I would render back the sweet loan with thanksgiving. What a struggle is it to bring my thoughts and will into a matter into captivity to the obedience of the Lord! Being working with her, being to nature like the tearing of one member of the body from another. But what shall I say? He has done it, and who am I that I should reply again?"

The circumstances of Mr. Erskine's family were such as to render it expedient for him to enter a second time into the marriage state. He was married on the 23d of January to Miss Mary Webster, "the worthy daughter of the champion for the truth and cause of Christ, Mr. Webster."

Mr. Erskine bore a considerable share in the controversy which was carried on, in the Church of Scotland, concerning the Marrow of Modern Divinity. The famous Resolution on this subject, which was laid before the General Assembly in 1721, was framed chiefly by him; and with Mr. Wilson of Maxton, drew up the answers to the twelve questions which were proposed to the Representatives of the Assembly. He was one of those who were called to the bar of the Assembly for the prominent part which he took in this business. But so far from accounting that which was inflicted on him a reproach, he regarded it as an honour that he should suffer in such a cause. "I considered it (said he) as a piece of the greatest honour that was put upon me, that the Lord called me forth to lift up my voice, or yet to suffer reproach for his precious truths. I am convinced, suffered so much injury by the Act of Toleration 1720, and the Act explicatory 1722; that as

I desire to die in this hope, that when some of this generation, who were the principal authors, and are the principal supporters of these acts, are off the stage; and when matters come to be impartially examined by a succeeding generation, whose honour shall not be dipt in the support of these acts, the design of our petition to the Assembly, and of our prayer to God shall be answered in their being repealed, both as being injurious to truth, and to the true honour of the Church of Scotland; and that the children who are yet unborn shall praise the Lord, who stirred up any of this generation to contend for injured truth, that it might be handed down to them in purity."

The high estimation in which Mr. Erskine was held, both as a preacher and as a public-spirited individual, procured him the honour of a call from several parishes, that were anxious to enjoy the benefits of his ministry. After several unsuccessful attempts had been made to remove him from the scene of his first labours, he at length accepted of a call that was given him to become one of the ministers of Stirling. His induction to his new charge in this town took place on the 6th of Sept., 1731. Here he occupied a much wider field of labour than that in which he had previously been stationed; and he applied himself with great diligence to the cultivation of it. The transactions in which he was led, by the course of events, to engage—soon after his removal to this place—gave to his name and character an honourable notoriety which they would not otherwise have possessed. Mr. Erskine, in common with many of his brethren in the ministry, gave a most decided opposition to the tyrannical course of procedure, which the supreme ecclesiastical judicatory of the national church was at this period pursuing. An overture had been introduced into the General Assembly, which met in May, 1731, by which it was declared, that in all cases where the right of appointing ministers to vacant parishes devolved upon the presbyteries, election should belong only to elders and to protestant heritors; and, in royal burghs, to the magistrates, town-council, and elders; and if any part of the burgh was landward, the heritors, being protestant, were to vote along with them. Though the presbyteries to whom this overture was transmitted (in terms of the barrier act) gave a decided expression of opinion against it, yet the Assembly gave it their sanction in 1732. Against the decision of the Assembly, adopting the overture, Mr. Erskine, and the other brethren with whom the Secession originated, protested. But the Assembly refused to receive or to record their protest.

Soon after this (10th Oct., 1732) the synod of Perth and Stirling met at Perth—when Mr. Erskine, who had been

moderator at the preceding meeting, preached his celebrated sermon from Psalm cxviii. 22. "The stone which the builders refused is become the head of the corner." In this discourse Mr. Erskine made some pointed allusions to the unscriptural nature of the law of patronage, and to the conduct of the late Assembly in imposing additional restrictions on the rights of the people. Some of the brethren were highly offended at the freedom which he had used, and made a complaint to the synod on the subject. A committee was appointed to collect the objectionable passages, and to lay them before the synod. After the committee had presented their report, a long discussion ensued; the result of which was, that Mr. Erskine was found censurable for the expressions which he had employed.

As I have detailed at considerable length, in the History of the Secession, the proceedings that took place both in the synod and in the General Assembly, in reference to this matter, I consider it unnecessary here to repeat the account which has been already given. Those who wish to make themselves acquainted with the origin of the Secession can consult the History itself. Suffice it to say, that after a variety of proceedings had taken place, first before the Assembly, and afterward before the Commission, Mr. Erskine's relationship to his congregation in Stirling was formally dissolved, and he was declared to be no longer a minister of the Church of Scotland, by a sentence of the Commission pronounced on the 16th of November, 1733. Three other ministers, who had cast in their lot with his—and who, from his first appearance at the bar of the Assembly, had been associated with him in all his proceedings—had a similar sentence pronounced upon them. These three associates were, Mr. William Wilson, minister at Perth; Mr. Alexander Moncrieff, minister at Abernethy; and Mr. James Fisher, minister at Kinclaven. When the sentence of the Commission, dissolving the relationship between these four brethren and their congregations, was intimated to them, they laid on the table of the Commission a paper declaring a Secession from the prevailing party in the Established Church, and asserting their liberty to exercise the office of the christian ministry, notwithstanding the censure which had been pronounced.

Mr. Erskine and the three brethren now mentioned met at Gairney Bridge, in the neighbourhood of Kinross, on the 5th of the following month (December)—and, after two days spent in prayer and serious deliberation, they constituted themselves into a presbytery, under the designation of *The Associate Presbytery*. Mr. Erskine was elected the first moderator. From this small beginning the Secession church took its rise;

and from that period till the present it has continued to enlarge its borders, until it has attained to a maturity and strength, which render it one of the most efficient instruments, at present existing, for promoting the interests of the Redeemer's kingdom.

The General Assembly, that met in May, 1734, authorized the synod of Perth and Stirling to remove the sentence which had been pronounced by the Commission against Mr. Erskine and the three other brethren, and to restore them to their charges—which was done by the synod in the month of July. But these brethren, having made a formal secession from the Established Church, refused to return to it, for reasons which they published to the world, and which have been recorded in the preceding History. They continued to associate together by themselves, as a presbytery; and received accessions from such ministers and congregations as were willing to join their society. They appointed Mr. Wilson Professor of Divinity, and licensed young men to preach the gospel. At length the Assembly, finding that there was no hope of their returning to the communion of the national church, pronounced a sentence of deposition upon the whole of the seceding brethren, on the 15th of May, 1740.

Mr. Erskine was thrust out of his place of worship in Stirling, immediately after the pronouncing of this sentence. But the great body of his congregation continued to cleave to him. A new and capacious place of worship was speedily erected for him, which was crowded every Sabbath. The people flocked to his ministry from the surrounding district. It was no uncommon thing for persons to travel on the Sabbath morning sixteen or eighteen miles, for the purpose of hearing him preach, and to return home again the same evening. If he was popular, as a minister, before the commencement of the Secession, his conduct during the transactions which led to the Secession rendered him still more so. His congregation was spread over a wide extent of country; and his labours in ministerial visitations, in examinations, and in preaching, were most abundant—besides the public duty which he was called upon to perform as a member of the Associate Presbytery.

During the rebellion that broke out in 1745, the town of Stirling was taken possession of by the rebels, and Mr. Erskine was obliged to withdraw himself from it for a short period, as he had taken an active part in those measures of defence which had been adopted by the inhabitants, and was otherwise distinguished for his loyalty. While the rebels continued in possession of the town, his congregation assembled on the sabbaths for worship in the wood of Tillibody, a few miles to the north of Stirling. Such was the zeal displayed by him in his Ma-

jesty's service, during this crisis, that a letter of th  
dressed to him by command of the Duke of Cuml

In the disputes that were carried on, in the Asso  
concerning the lawfulness of Seceders swearing  
clause contained in the burgess-oath, he took a  
with those who maintained the affirmative side of th  
and who insisted, that the taking of the oath sho  
a matter of forbearance. When the rupture, whi  
trovrsy occasioned, took place in April, 1747, he  
those who adhered to the Burgher portion of the  
consequence of Mr. Moncrieff of Abernethy, who p  
the Theological Seminary, adhering to the opposi  
the Secession, the Burgher section was left destitu  
fessor; and Mr. Erskine consented, at the request  
ren, to superintend the studies of those who were  
for the office of the ministry. This important cha  
tinued to hold only for a short period. The grea  
labour rendered necessary by the extent of his co  
and the infirmities connected with an advanced pe  
obliged him to resign at the end of two years.

Mr. Erskine was called upon to mourn the loss o  
wife. She died on the 15th of March, 1751; and  
was drawing near to the close of his mortal journey.  
now become, in a great measure, incapable of perfo  
duties of his ministry. His affectionate people n  
sion for an assistant: and having given a call to h  
Mr. James Erskine, this amiable youth was ord  
league and successor to his uncle on the 22d of Janu

The last sermon Mr. Erskine preached, was add  
company assembled in his bed-room, on the occas  
baptizing a child. The text, with which he con  
ministry, was Psalm xlviii. 14. "This God is our G  
and ever; he will be our guide even unto death."  
was now done. His body was worn out, in his M  
vice. The messenger of death approached, and  
calmly waiting for the summons. He fell asleep in  
the 2d of June, 1754; and his mortal remains were  
the centre of the spacious church, which his people  
for him at the commencement of the Secession.  
character of this excellent person, I refer my read  
account that has been given of his death in the r  
of the narrative.

As an author Mr. Erskine is chiefly known by  
mons that have been published in his name. In the  
of his ministry, he appears to have been reluctant  
any of his sermons: but this reluctance was overc  
necessity, that was imposed upon him, to vindica

against aspersions that were thrown out against his doctrine by some of his brethren in the ministry. The charges preferred against him had a reference to the Marrow doctrine, of which Mr. Erskine was a keen defender. For the purpose of showing what were the sentiments he really held, on the controverted points, he published the sermons that were objected to. These sermons were seven in number, and made their appearance at different periods. His first publication was a sermon on Rev. iii. 4. which was published in 1725. In the apologetical preface prefixed to this discourse he has the following remarks:—"It is very probable that this and some other sermons now designed for the press, had slept in perpetual silence among my short-hand manuscripts, if holy and wise providence, which over-rules us in our designs and inclinations, had not, in a manner, forced me to yield to their publication, for my own necessary defence; when the earnest entreaty of some, dear to the Lord, could not prevail with me to fall in with any such proposal. The conduct of adorable providence in this matter has brought me under such a conviction of a culpable obstinacy in resisting their solicitations, that I sincerely resolve, through grace, not to be so shy in time coming; especially if I find that these sermons, which are almost extorted from me, shall prove useful and edifying."

Mr. Erskine gave to the world, at various periods, a considerable number of sermons, which were published in small pamphlets—some of them anonymously, and others of them with his name affixed. After his death they were collected by his son-in-law, the Rev. James Fisher, and were published at Edinburgh, in the year 1761, in four duodecimo volumes. A volume of posthumous discourses, edited by his son, Mr. David Erskine, had previously to this period made its appearance in 1755. Mr. Erskine's sermons have gone through numerous editions, in a variety of forms; and few publications of the kind have been more highly relished by serious Christians, or have been more extensively useful. The strain of them is highly evangelical—and they are well fitted for conveying to the mind correct and scriptural views of the doctrines of the gospel.

Mr. Erskine published a pamphlet on the burgh-oath controversy, entitled "The true state of the question, on which a breach followed in the Associate Synod at Edinburgh, 9th April, 1747." Another pamphlet, which appeared at the commencement of the Secession, entitled "The true state of the process against Mr. Ebenezer Erskine," has also been ascribed to his pen. He bore a part, along with his brethren, in preparing the following documents;—"Representation" concerning the condemnation of the Marrow—"Answers to the twelve

queries"—“Reasons for not acceding to the Establishment”—“Act of the Associate Presbytery concerning the Act of Grace”—the first part of the Exposition of the Faith, usually denominated “Fisher’s Catechism.”

Eminent ministers in the church of England, and Dissenters, have borne honourable testimony to the value of Mr. Erskine’s discourses. The Rev. James Beattie, well-known author of *Theron and Aspasio*, has borne his opinion concerning them in the following terms: “I have read to read in order to refine my taste, or improve my style, I prefer Bishop Atterbury’s sermons, Dr. Bates’ sermons, and Seed’s discourses. But were I to read with a view to the edification of my heart in true faith, solid piety, and evangelical holiness, I would have recourse to Mr. Erskine, and take his volumes for my guide, my companion, and my familiar friend.” The celebrated Thomas Bradburn, a dissenting minister in London, and author of *the “Mystery of Godliness,”* in a recommendation prefixed to a volume, published in London, containing the two Erskines, says: “In these sermons, the reader will find a faithful adherence to the design of the work, a clear defence of those doctrines that are the pillars of truth, a large compass of thought, a strong force of argument, and a happy flow of words, both judicious and elegant. The writings of Mr. Ebenezer Erskine, though they do not claim to anything like elegance of diction or rhetorical style, yet are distinguished for a rich strain of piety, sentiment, and are expressed in language highly interesting, often energetic, though occasionally homely; so that the mind of a pious reader, the perusal of them cannot fail to yield both pleasure and instruction. By his discourses, though dead, he still continues to act the part of an instructor to the church of Christ.

REV. WILLIAM WILSON, A.M., PERTH.

Mr. Wilson was born at Glasgow on the 9th of March 1690. His father, Mr. Gilbert Wilson, possessed a considerable estate in Lanarkshire, and was one of those who suffered persecution during the reign of the second Charles. His mother was Isabella Ramsay, a daughter of a gentleman who possessed property in Forfarshire. This lady, having been converted by the instrumentality of the famous Mr. Guthrie, and in consequence, embraced the presbyterian religion, was converted by her father, who was a staunch Episcopalian.

Mr. Wilson’s views were early directed to the ministry. After having gone through the usual

training at school, he became a student in the University of Glasgow, and was licensed to preach the gospel by the presbytery of Dunfermline on the 23d of September, 1713. The day after he was licensed, he made his first appearance in public, as a preacher of the gospel, in the church of Saline. In the summer of 1716, having gone to Pitcaithly wells for the benefit of his health, he preached in the town of Perth, and his services were so acceptable to the inhabitants, that they gave him a unanimous call to be colleague to their minister, Mr. Black. His ordination took place on the 1st of November, the same year. His introductory discourse, on the first Sabbath after his ordination, was preached from Colossians i. 28. 'Whom we preach, warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom, that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus.'

On the 20th of June, 1721, he entered into the married state. The object of his choice was Margaret Alexander, daughter of an advocate in Edinburgh,—a young lady distinguished for her piety, and nearly related, by her mother, to some of the Scottish nobility. Mr. Wilson's associates in the ministry were those eminent men who acquired celebrity in the church by the active part which they took in the Marrow controversy. The state of religion in the Scottish church, during the early period of his ministry, may be inferred from the following extract taken from his diary.

"As to the present state and condition of the Church of Scotland, matters look with a very dismal and threatening aspect. Ministers are thrust in upon vacant parishes, contrary to the wishes of elders and people, in all corners of the land. Disaffected heritors interest themselves everywhere in the settlement of parishes, and they introduce such ministers as elders and people are averse to. Our congregations are thus planted with a set of corrupt ministers, who are strangers to the power of godliness; and, therefore, neither in their doctrine nor walk, is there any savour of Christ about them. Yea, such are becoming the prevailing party among the ministry, and too many of these are mockers at the exercises and real experiences of the godly. At the opening of our synodical meeting at Perth, Mr. Thomas F——, minister at Dumbarnie, preached a very loose general sermon, with a sneer, and some bitter invectives, against serious ministers. Some, said he, loved a popular cant, and affected to make grimaces in preaching. This same man, some short time after, when Mr. Moncrieff, of Abernethy, remarked, on a young man's discourse, before the presbytery of Perth, that there was nothing of Christ in it, had the assurance to reply, 'And must Christ still be the burden of the song?' Yet,

the presbytery took no notice of the scandalous expression,—a sad swatch of the spirit that prevails among us.”\*

Some time after his settlement in Perth, Mr. Wilson received a call from the parish of Rhynd; and though he himself was rather inclined to accept of it, yet the presbytery gave their decision in favour of his continuing in his present charge; and, as his parishioners clung to him with a devoted attachment, he cordially acquiesced in the decision.

An effort was made at this period to stem the tide of corruption and error, which had set in strong upon the national church. A number of faithful ministers joined together in preparing a representation and petition to be laid before the General Assembly, calling upon them to take into consideration the grievances and abuses that prevailed in the church. Mr. Wilson was one of those who took an active part in this matter. A representation to the above effect was prepared and subscribed by forty-two ministers and three elders, with a view to its being laid before the Assembly at their meeting in 1732. But the committee of bills refused to transmit the representation; and when a number of the representers appeared at the bar of the Assembly and complained of the committee's refusal, they were denied a hearing.

In the discussions which took place, in the synod of Perth and Stirling, on the sermon preached by Mr. Ebenezer Erskine—and of which a particular account has been given in the preceding History—Mr. Wilson warmly espoused the cause of Mr. Erskine, vindicating him against the attacks of his opponents. When the synod found that Mr. Erskine was censurable for the expressions which he had used in his discourse, Mr. Wilson, along with eleven other ministers, protested against the decision. Of the twelve ministers, who protested against the decision of the synod, only three appeared at the bar of the Assembly to follow out their protest. These were Messrs. Wilson, Moncrieff, and Fisher: but they were not permitted to be heard, in support of their reasons of protest. The sentence which the Assembly pronounced, affirming the decision of the synod finding Mr. Erskine censurable, has already been noticed in a former part of this work. To the protest, which Mr. Erskine presented against this sentence of the Assembly, Mr. Wilson and the two excellent men now mentioned adhered.

Mr. Wilson completely identified himself with his friend Mr. Erskine in the proceedings that took place at the commencement of the Secession. The commission, that met in the month of August, 1733, suspended him from the exercise

\* *Ferrier's Memoirs of the Rev. W. Wilson* p. 68.

of his ministry, because he refused to retract his protest, or to express sorrow on account of having presented it; and on the 16th of November, the same year, the Commission declared (for the same reasons) his relation to his congregation dissolved,—and that, from henceforth, he was no longer to be acknowledged as a minister of the national church. He considered it to be his duty to co-operate with his three brethren, Messrs. Erskine, Moncrieff, and Fisher, in the formation of the Associate Presbytery,—and attended the meeting which was held at Gairney Bridge, for this purpose, on the 5th and 6th of December. He was appointed at that meeting, along with Mr. Moncrieff, to prepare a statement of the reasons of their separation from the national church. This document was afterwards published under the sanction of the presbytery, and was entitled “A Testimony to the doctrine, government, and discipline of the Church of Scotland,” &c.

When the Assembly, that met in May, 1734, passed an act authorizing the restoration of the four seceding brethren to their respective charges, Mr. Wilson was for sometime considerably at a loss, as to the course which he ought to pursue,—whether to return to the bosom of the national church, or still continue in a state of separation from it. In a communication, which he sent to his friend Mr. Erskine immediately after the Assembly, he expressed a hope that a re-union with the Church might be accomplished; and it was not till the proceedings of two or three subsequent Assemblies showed him how vain it was to cherish such a hope, that he finally renounced it. In the Continuation of his Defence (p. 30.) he says—“I own, that after the meeting of Assembly 1734, I was in much perplexity about our continuing in a state of secession. It occasioned many thoughts of heart unto me, to understand what was duty in the present case. But as I had no hesitation about my duty, when I did, with my other three brethren, declare a secession from the judicatories of this Church, in our protestation before the Commission, 1733; so when I have observed the conduct of the said judicatories, since the year 1734, I have been gradually cleared, and more and more confirmed, that it is our duty to continue in a state of secession.”

The Associate Presbytery delayed for a period of three years, taking any steps with a view to train up young men for the office of the ministry,—cherishing a lingering hope that, possibly, such an improvement might take place in the administration of the affairs of the national church, as might warrant their returning to her communion. But this hope having vanished,—and having resolved to institute a Theological Seminary for the training of candidates for the ministry,

—they unanimously chose Mr. Wilson to be their Theological Professor. For this important charge he was peculiarly well qualified by his amiable disposition, his fervent piety, his extensive acquaintance with the scriptures, and his solid learning.

In 1740, Mr. Wilson had a sentence of deposition pronounced upon him, by the General Assembly, in common with the other seceding ministers; and on the Sabbath immediately after the pronouncing of the sentence, he was forcibly excluded from his usual place of worship by the interposition of the civil authorities. The scene that took place on that interesting occasion has been described in the main body of the narrative. The following account given by Mr. Wilson's biographer, of what took place in his family, before proceeding to the church to discharge the duties of the day, is worthy of being extracted,—“On the morning of the Lord's day, when the Assembly's instructions to the civil powers, just that morning received, were to be carried into effect, Mr. Wilson and his interesting family, who were very regular in their domestic habits, were observed by the servants to be in a state of uncommon concern. Though the cause was in a great measure unknown to the domestics, they perceived that something unusual had occurred. The breakfast table was laid at the usual hour; but Mr. and Mrs. Wilson continued closely shut up in their chamber, and seemed in deep thoughtfulness, to forget their wonted habits, and to be so entirely engaged in intercourse with God, as to be above the cares of this life, and to forget, or not to feel, the common cravings of nature.

“Mr. Wilson remained in his chamber till the hour of public worship. On leaving it, he went directly to the church. As he left the house to proceed, on this trying day, to the discharge of his ministerial duties, an aged domestic, long an inmate of the family,—the same who had served his father in earlier times, and supplied him with daily nourishment, when he was driven from his house and property by the violence of the persecution,—ventured to accost him in the language of friendly caution, ‘Tak care what ye’re doin’, Mr. William,’ said she, for so from early habit she still sometimes called him, ‘Tak care what ye’re doin’, for I fear if things gang on this way, I’ll get ye’re food to carry to the muir, as I did ye’re father’s before ye.’”\*

On that day, Mr. Wilson preached in the Glovers' Yard of Perth to a large assemblage. In this place his congregation continued to assemble, until a new and spacious place of wor-

\* Ferrier's Memoirs of the Rev. W. Wilson, p. 336.

ship was erected by them. His sphere of usefulness was not abridged by his expulsion from his church. People from the neighbouring parishes flocked to his ministry,—so that his charge was spread over a considerably extensive district of country. As a minister, he was much beloved on account of his amiable qualities,—and highly venerated on account of his talents and piety. None of the Seceding brethren enjoyed a greater share of popularity or respect than he did.

His ministerial career was brought prematurely to a close. In the summer of 1741, his health began to give way. The extent and variety of his labours gradually exhausted the energies of his frame. Nor need we be surprised at this, when we consider the work which he had to perform. He had to preach, for the most part, four times every week, and to superintend a numerous congregation scattered over a wide tract of country. Three months in the year his time and attention were occupied with the business of the theological class. The lectures which he delivered to the students, were prepared by him in the Latin language. In addition to all this, on him chiefly devolved the task of drawing up, for the press, the public papers that were issued in the name of the Associate Presbytery. It would have required a constitution of iron to resist the grinding effects produced by such incessant and accumulated labour. Mr. Wilson's frame sunk beneath it. He preached his last sermon on the 27th September, 1741, from the ninth verse of the forty-eighth Psalm, 'We have thought of thy loving-kindness, O God, in the midst of thy temple.' From this period his strength began rapidly to decline, and within less than a fortnight he breathed his last. He died on the 8th of October, 1741, in the fifty-first year of his age, and the twenty-fifth of his ministry. His remains were interred in the burying-ground of Perth.

By his death the Secession church sustained a severe loss. He was a person of great activity of mind, and of excellent business habits, and was well-fitted for taking a lead in the management of affairs. He possessed extensive acquirements as a scholar. His talents were of a superior order. He was eminently versed in the scriptures: and as a preacher he was animated and persuasive. "In preaching, he evidenced (said Professor Brown of Haddington) the greatest concern, heavenliness, mildness, and majesty, that ever I heard."

As an author, Mr. Wilson's productions are not numerous. The principal of them—and the one to which he is chiefly indebted for his celebrity as a writer—is his *Defence of Reformation Principles*, with the "Continuation." This work was written in reply to Mr. Currie, minister at Kinglassie, who was one of the keenest and bitterest assailants of the

Secession. As a controversial work, the Defence is excellent. It is free from all asperity and personal recrimination. The tone of it is calm, dignified, and convincing.

The only other works of Mr. Wilson consist of sermons, printed singly, some of them during his lifetime, and others after his death. The following list of them is extracted from Mr. Ferrier's Memoir of him.

1. The Church's extremity, Christ's opportunity: on Micah iv. 10. Preached at Abernethy sacrament, 17th July, 1738.

2. The Lamb's retinue attending him whithersoever he goeth: on Rev. xiv. 4. Preached at Orwell, 6th August, 1738.

3. The Father's promise to the Son, a clear bow in the church's darkest cloud; or, the spiritual seed of Christ preserved in all ages, and amidst all dangers: on Psalm lxxxix. 29. The substance of several sermons, preached at Perth in the years 1729, and 1730.

4. The watchman's duty and desire, or, the prayer of faithful ministers for the Lord's beauty on his church, and success in their work: on Psalm xc. 17.

5. The blessedness lost in the first Adam, to be found in Christ the second Adam; being the substance of some sermons on Psalm lxxii. 17.

6. Steadfastness in the faith recommended; in a sermon preached at Perth, 22d July, 1733, on 1 Cor. xvi. 13.

7. The day of a sinner's believing in Christ, a most remarkable day; preached in the new church of Perth, on Song iii. 11.

#### REV. ALEXANDER MONCRIEFF, A.M., OF CULFARGIE.

This eminent minister was descended from a race distinguished for their piety and for their worldly respectability. His grandfather, Mr. Alexander Moncrieff, minister at Scoonie, suffered imprisonment and banishment for his attachment to the cause of Christ, during the persecution that was carried on in Scotland during the reign of the second Charles. His father, Matthew Moncrieff, was proprietor of Culfargie, a considerable estate situated on the banks of the Earne, in the parish of Abernethy. His mother's name was Margaret Mitchell, an eminently religious and prudent woman.

Mr. Moncrieff was born in July, 1695. In early life he manifested a strong predilection for the christian ministry, and his education was conducted with a view to the sacred office. Having gone through the usual preparatory course at the grammar-school, he was enrolled as a student in the university of St. Andrews. Here three years were spent by him in the study of philosophy, and other three in the study of divinity. At the close of this period, he passed over to Leyden,

in Holland, and prosecuted his studies under the celebrated Professors Mark and Waelig. He continued for about a year in this place, during which period he was unremitting in his studies. He attended four, and sometimes five classes, besides devoting seven or eight hours every day to reading and study. He returned in August, 1717, to Scotland.

At an early period of his studies he became the subject of strong religious convictions, and experienced deep distress of mind. In this state of mind he left the college, at the close of the session in 1712, and a considerable portion of the summer recess was spent by him under the roof of his uncle, Mr. William Moncrieff, minister at Largo. He derived much benefit from the ministry and conversation of this excellent man. During his trouble he sought relief from God in prayer; and while he abode at Largo, he was accustomed to retire to the church and the churchyard, that there he might undisturbed pour out his soul before God, confessing his sin and imploring forgiveness. Nor were his supplications presented in vain. God, in answer to his prayer, gave him such discoveries of his mercy, as produced in him a sorrow for sin. Soon after this he was received into the fellowship of the church, and he has described in the following language the emotions which he experienced on that interesting occasion : —“ In June, at the communion of Largo, I got more of a broken heart on the Sabbath-day than ever I found before; not in a terrible, but in a sweet and pleasant manner, by many degrees more than I had ever formerly experienced : a day I ought never to forget. I hope my sorrow was genuine and evangelical.”

At this period, his mind was much exercised in reference to the work of the ministry, to which he was looking forward. He was deeply impressed with the high responsibility of it, and looked forward to it with a feeling of earnest desire. His musings on this subject he has recorded in the following terms : “ I design to apply myself as closely as possible to reading and study for some years, in order to be a minister, if the Lord will. I desire to give the Lord the offer of my service, though I have nothing but sin and want. And if he shall, through Christ and grace, accept of me, and give me all furniture, Christ in the first place, and all necessary gifts; making me a friend of the Bridegroom, and one of the children of the family, and employ me as an instrument for bringing in others; I think I will have reason to praise him through all eternity.” —“ If thou call me to the ministry of thy dear Son, Lord, direct and manage wisely and kindly as to the time, that it may not be sooner or later than is for thy glory. Keep me from a sinful hand or aim. Let me have thy glory

always in my eye, and give me thy presence,—O God, do it, or I cry that thou carry me not up hence.”—“Do not I long, O Lord, if thou wilt give me thine own call and be with me, to have the happiness of commending Christ to others? Oh! commend him effectually to my own soul.”

As the time drew nigh when he should receive licence, he became more and more impressed with the importance of the work in which he was to be engaged. The solemn impressions which he had, in the view of becoming a preacher of the gospel, may be learned from the following sentences, which he penned when he was about to be licensed: “It is a very weighty matter to be a minister. I can, through divine aid, venture my own soul; since God hath made it, I should serve him with it; and I may be severely punished if I refuse, when called to be a minister, because of its difficulty or danger. But shall I risk other people’s souls? If God in mercy do not prevent it, I may be instrumental in damning, instead of saving them. If I be a minister, I should have skill of my business, as every man of his trade. I should thoroughly know the disease of sin, and the remedy, Christ: if I know not my business, I should not meddle with it.”

Soon after Mr. Moncrieff’s return from Leyden—probably about the beginning of the year 1718—he entered on trials for licence before the presbytery of Perth, and, having completed them to the satisfaction of the presbytery, he was licensed to preach the gospel. In 1720, the parish of Abernethy having become vacant by the death of their minister, a petition was presented to the presbytery to appoint a moderation with a view to Mr. Moncrieff. The prayer of the petition was granted. The moderation took place in the month of April, and a most harmonious call was given to Mr. Moncrieff,—no fewer than sixty-one heritors and thirteen elders voting for him. Though the bulk of the people had not the privilege of voting, yet they most cheerfully acquiesced. His ordination took place in September, the same year. A relation of his own, Mr. Moncrieff of Methven, presided on the occasion.

Two years after his ordination he entered into the marriage state. The object of his choice was Miss Mary Clerk, daughter of Sir John Clerk of Pennycuik, a lady of high christian excellence. She died a few years after the marriage, leaving him one son, Matthew, who was afterwards ordained as colleague and successor to his father. Some time after her death, he married again. His second wife was Miss Jane Lyon, daughter to Mr. William Lyon, minister of Airlie. This lady brought him a numerous family,—no fewer than fifteen children, eight of whom died in their infancy. She survived her husband during the long period of thirty years.

The Marrow controversy was raging at its hottest in Scotland at the period of Mr. Moncrieff's settlement. Though he did not rank as one of the Marrow men, he was decidedly friendly to the cause which they espoused. When a meeting of ministers was held at Edinburgh, in May 1721, to prepare a representation, remonstrating against an act which the General Assembly had passed, in reference to this controversy, Mr. Moncrieff attended on the occasion. But it would appear, from a statement contained in Boston's Memoirs, that he did not altogether acquiesce in the representation that had been prepared. The nature of the objections which he urged is not stated. They did not, however, originate in any indifference, on his part, to the doctrines of free grace; for of these he was, on all occasions, a strenuous assertor.

When the synod of Perth and Stirling, in October, 1732, found Mr. Ebenezer Erskine censurable for certain expressions made use of by him, in the sermon which he preached at the opening of the synod, Mr. Moncrieff warmly espoused the cause of Mr. Erskine. He was one of the twelve who entered their dissent against the decision of the synod in this matter. He appeared also as a protestor at the bar of the General Assembly; but was not allowed to be heard in support of his protest. In all the subsequent proceedings connected with the formation of the Secession, he bore a prominent part. Because he would not withdraw the protest which he had taken against the proceedings of the Assembly in reference to Mr. Erskine, he was suspended from the exercise of his ministry by the Commission that met in August, 1733; and in the month of November, the same year, his relation to his congregation was dissolved. He met along with the other fathers of the Secession at Gairney Bridge, and took part in the important deliberations which issued in the formation of the Associate Presbytery.

Nothing daunted by the treatment which he had received from the Commission, he continued to occupy his pulpit at Abernethy, and to perform all the duties of his parish as if no sentence had been pronounced. Professor Campbell of St. Andrews was appointed to intimate from the pulpit of Abernethy the sentence of the Commission, dissolving Mr. Moncrieff's connection with his congregation, and declaring him no longer a minister of the national church, but found that the attachment of Mr. Moncrieff's parishioners to their minister was so strong, that he was unable to get the sentence intimated. He applied to the sheriff-substitute of the county to support him in the discharge of his duty, but the sheriff refused to interfere. The Professor protested against the sheriff's conduct, and made a complaint to the Assembly on

the subject. No farther notice, however, was taken of the affair. Mr. Moncrieff's popularity, in common with that of the other seceding brethren, was greatly increased by the firm and resolute manner in which he had acted. At the sacramental occasion at Abernethy, in the spring of 1734, such a concourse of people assembled, as had never been witnessed on any similar occasion.

The sentence pronounced by the Assembly that met in 1734, authorizing the synod of Perth and Stirling to restore the seceding ministers to their charges, produced no change on Mr. Moncrieff's sentiments. He was equally decided with his brethren in refusing to accept of the invitation that was given, to resume their seats in the judicatories of the national church.

He acted a very dignified and disinterested part, after sentence of deposition was pronounced upon him by the Assembly in 1740. Though no attempt was made to exclude him by violence from the parish church, which he had hitherto occupied, he refused to enter it; and continued preaching in the open air, till a new place of worship was erected for him by his people. During the remaining period of his ministry among them, he refused to receive from them any emolument in name of stipend; though, on account of their number and respectability, they would neither have felt it to be a burden, nor regarded it as a hardship, to allow him an adequate maintenance. The ample patrimony which he possessed, rendered him independent in his worldly circumstances. Entitled, however, as he was by the law of Christ, to support from those among whom he laboured, his disinterestedness in labouring gratuitously among his people was not on that account the less conspicuous or praiseworthy.

On the death of Mr. Wilson of Perth, the talents, learning, and piety of Mr. Moncrieff pointed him out as a fit person to succeed that distinguished individual in the office which he held as Professor of Divinity to the Associate Presbytery. He was accordingly unanimously elected by the Presbytery, in the month of February, 1742, to fill the Theological Chair; and the duties connected with this important situation he continued to discharge, with great ability and success, till the period of his death.

During the rebellion in 1745, Mr. Moncrieff was distinguished for his loyal attachment to the reigning family. He prayed publicly, in hearing of the rebels, for King George. He refused to pay cess, or to permit any one to pay it in his name, to the collectors whom the rebels appointed. When a party of soldiers was sent to levy by force the impost which he refused voluntarily to pay, he pointed out to the officers the

criminality of the course which they were pursuing, and assigned as the reason of his refusal, that he could not acknowledge the authority of the Pretender, nor give any countenance to his cause. His remonstrances and protestations were of no avail. The party plundered him of his cattle and furniture. They also carried off his eldest son, and put him in prison at Perth, threatening, that if any attempt were made on the part of the people to rescue him, they would take his life. While Mr. Moncrieff refused to give his support in any form to the rebel party, he considered it his duty to prevent the people who were under his charge from giving them any countenance. Two members of his congregation, having been found guilty of sinful compliance with the rebels, were subjected to ecclesiastical censure.

In the disputes that were carried on concerning the lawfulness of Seceders swearing the religious clause that was found in some of the burgess oaths, Mr. Moncrieff took a decided part with those who were opposed to the swearing of this clause; and when the disruption took place, which this controversy occasioned in the Associate Synod, he adhered to the Antiburgher portion of the Secession.

In January, 1749, Mr. Moncrieff had the happiness of having his son, Mr. Matthew Moncrieff, ordained as his colleague and successor. This measure was rendered necessary by the extent of Mr. Moncrieff's congregation, and by the arduous labours which he had to perform. He still continued, however, unremittingly to discharge the duties both of his ministry and professorship.

When the Synod, of which Mr. Moncrieff was a member, took Mr. Mair of Orwell to task for the objectionable sentiments which he held on the subject of universal redemption, Mr. Moncrieff showed his zeal for the maintenance of purity of doctrine by the decided and business-like manner, in which he brought under the consideration of the court, the unscriptural opinions which Mr. Mair was charged with holding. His knowledge and talents peculiarly fitted him for conducting such a delicate and perplexing business. A short while before his death, he was very anxious that the Synod should take into consideration the duty of laying before the king a statement of their grievances, concerning the state of religion in these lands, and of presenting at the same time a petition, with a view to get the grievances redressed. His brethren, however, were almost unanimously opposed to this motion. Though he submitted it to their notice at several meetings, he was unsuccessful in obtaining their sanction to it. The principle involved in it, was considered, by those who took the lead in opposing it, to be too Erastian.

Though Mr. Moncrieff's health was considerably impaired during the summer of 1761, yet he was enabled to attend to his ministerial duties; and such was the interest he took in the general prosperity of the religious community with which he was connected, that only a fortnight before his death, he undertook a journey of forty miles to execute some benevolent plan which he had formed for giving support to a weak congregation that had been deprived of its minister. Scarcely had he returned home from this errand of benevolence, when he was laid upon the bed of death. During the last twenty-four hours of his life, he was incapable of making himself be understood by those who attended him in his illness: only, he was heard breathing out praises to God a short while before he expired. In this heavenly frame of mind, he terminated his mortal career on the 7th of October, 1761, in the 67th year of his age, and the 42d of his ministry.

He was a most faithful, disinterested, and devoted labourer in the vineyard of Christ. He was held in high reputation, as a minister, while he lived; and he died regretted and lamented by the good. He was a man much given to prayer. His visits to the throne of grace were frequent. Besides his stated seasons of retirement for this purpose, he was observed to be often engaged in ejaculatory prayer. He was accustomed to send up, in this form, the pious aspirations of his heart to the throne of God, when he was engaged in the ministrations of the pulpit, or in lecturing to the students, or in company. It is said, that on a certain occasion, when he made a longer pause than usual, in his preaching, a woman whispered to one of her neighbours,—“ See! Culfargie is away to heaven, and left us all sitting here.” He was ardent in his temperament—an animated preacher—and eager in the prosecution of any object which he had in view. He possessed unbending integrity—was exceedingly conscientious—and most resolute in pursuing what he conceived to be the path of duty. His name will descend with honour to posterity, as one of that small and intrepid band of men with whom the Secession originated.

As an author, Mr. Moncrieff was distinguished, during his lifetime, for a learned defence of the supreme Deity of Christ, which he wrote in opposition to the heresy of Professor Simson. He published also some sermons and pamphlets on various subjects. These (or at least the greater part of them) were collected after his death, and published by his son, Mr. William Moncrieff, minister at Alloa, along with some other of his productions, in two volumes, in 1779. In these works he manifests an ardent zeal for purity of gospel doctrine, a strong attachment to the principles of the Secession Church, and an earnest desire to promote practical godliness

## REV. JAMES FISHER, GLASGOW.

The name of Fisher is honourably associated with those of Erskine, Wilson, and Moncrieff, as one of the Fathers of the Secession. A debt of gratitude is due to him, in common with these eminent men, for the energetic support which he gave, during a long life, to the cause of pure religion—and for the decided stand which he made in behalf of the Christian liberties of the people, at a period when they were in danger of being trampled under foot. The particulars which I have been able to glean concerning his early history are few. He was born at Barr, in Ayrshire, on the 23d of January, 1697. His father, Mr. Thomas Fisher, was minister of that parish, but was afterwards translated to Rhynd near Perth. His mother's name was Susannah Menzies. Having completed the course of study prescribed by the laws of the Scottish church, he was licensed to preach the gospel by the Presbytery of Perth; and was ordained minister of the parish of Kinclaven in the beginning of the year 1726. In the month of July, 1727, he was married at Portmoak to Miss Jean Erskine, eldest daughter of Mr. Ebenezer Erskine.

At an early period of his ministry, he began to take an active part in ecclesiastical affairs. The tyrannical course, pursued by the ruling party in the national church, was such as to excite in the bosom of many of the best of her sons feelings of sorrow and alarm. Mr. Fisher participated in these feelings. In 1731, he met, along with five other ministers, to consider what measures it might be proper for them to adopt, with the view of procuring a redress of those grievances which were exciting such dissatisfaction in the minds of the people. At this meeting it was resolved to prepare a representation, to be presented to the next General Assembly, containing a statement of grievances and craving redress. A representation was accordingly prepared, and subscribed by forty-two ministers and three elders. But when it was presented to the Assembly, at their meeting in 1732, that venerable body would not allow it to be read. Fifteen of the subscribers protested against this treatment on the part of the Assembly—but their protest shared the same fate with the representation, as the Assembly would not receive it. The names of all the Fathers of the Secession were appended to the protest.

It may naturally be supposed, that Mr. Fisher did not regard with indifference those proceedings which were carried on against his father-in-law, Mr. Erskine. When these proceedings commenced in the Synod of Perth and Stirling, Mr. Fisher opposed the motion that was made, to in-

flict censure on Mr. Erskine—but the Synod would not allow him to vote on the question. They could not, however, prevent him from entering his protest against their decision. From this period he became identified with Mr. Erskine in all the steps that led to the Secession. He appeared, along with Messrs. Wilson and Moncrieff, at the bar of the Assembly, in support of Mr. Erskine's cause: and having cast in his lot with these venerable men, he shared with them in the unjust and tyrannical treatment which they received from the commission, when they were first suspended from the exercise of their ministry, and afterwards had their relation to their congregations dissolved.

Mr. Fisher cordially co-operated with his brethren in the formation of the Associate Presbytery. Being elected clerk of the Presbytery, he continued to discharge for several years the duties of that office. The expulsion of Mr. Fisher from the national church did not affect the relation existing between him and the parishioners of Kinclaven. So far from abandoning his ministry, they clung to him with a stronger attachment than ever. When the minister, whom the General Assembly had appointed to intimate a vacancy in the parish, in consequence of the sentence which they had pronounced, arrived on the Sabbath forenoon, he found Mr. Fisher already in possession of the pulpit addressing a crowded audience; and he was obliged to take his station on the outside, at the west end of the church, where he executed the commission assigned him, in presence of two witnesses specially summoned for the purpose.

The sphere of Mr. Fisher's labours was greatly enlarged by the Secession; for his congregation received a considerable accession from the surrounding parishes. Persons attended his ministry from the parishes of Little Dunkeld, Redgorton, Moneidy, Caputh, Lethendy, Clunie, Cargill, Dundee;—and some came even from a greater distance. Great crowds resorted to the sacramental occasions. They came to these solemnities not only from the adjoining parishes, but from the west of Scotland, and even from Ireland. It is stated, that on the Monday of a communion, when some strangers were making arrangements about returning home to their dwellings, and inquiring whom they would get to accompany them—the names of certain individuals being mentioned as likely to travel along with them, provided they could find them out—the reply was, "Why need we look out for them, they are going no farther than to Glasgow?"

As the population of the parish of Kinclaven was small, the crowds of worshippers, that came from a distance to attend the sacramental occasions, could not be accommodated in

dwelling-houses. They were obliged to take up their abode, during the evening, in the parish church; and companies occasionally lodged in an adjacent wood called the Hill of Kinclaven. Mr. Ralph Erskine, when assisting his friend Mr. Fisher on one of these occasions, having gone out on a Sabbath morning, heard all around him the sounds of prayer and praise. When he returned to his brethren he said,—“We shall have an excellent day, for the birds are singing very sweetly in the wood.”

When the Secession congregation of Shuttle Street (now Greyfriars) was formed in Glasgow, they turned their attention to Mr. Fisher, as a person who, on account of his talents and popularity, was well-qualified to occupy that important situation. They gave him a unanimous call, of which he accepted. The Presbytery consented to his removal; and in the month of October, 1741, he was translated from Kinclaven to Glasgow. A large and flourishing congregation rose up under his ministry. The year after his removal to his new charge was memorable on account of the great religious excitement that prevailed in the west of Scotland, in consequence of the preaching of Whitefield. This excitement was regarded with an unfavourable eye by the Seceders, who used strong condemnatory language on the subject. A keen controversy was carried on concerning the nature of the “Cam-buslang Work.” In this controversy Mr. Fisher took an active part. The language employed by Mr. Fisher, in common with the other Seceders, in reprobating the “Work,” cannot be vindicated.

In all the stages of the controversy, which was carried on, in the Associate Synod, concerning the burgess-oath question, Mr. Fisher acted along with the Burgher party. After the rupture took place, he was chosen moderator of the first meeting of the Burgher Synod, held at Stirling on the 16th of June, 1747. At this meeting, he was appointed, along with some of the other brethren, to prepare an exposition of the Assembly's Shorter Catechism. The largest portion of this excellent work was the production of his pen; and hence it is familiarly known by the title of “Fisher's Catechism.”

Mr. Ebenezer Erskine being obliged to resign, on account of his increasing infirmities, the temporary charge which he had of the students of divinity, connected with the Burgher portion of the Secession, Mr. Fisher was, on the 7th of September, 1749, unanimously elected Professor of Theology—which situation he continued to occupy, with great credit to himself, and much advantage to the association, for a period of fifteen years.

In the year 1771, Mr. Fisher received, as his colleague and

successor in the ministry, Mr. George Henderson, a young man of amiable dispositions and promising attainments. Four years after this event, Mr. Fisher's ministerial career terminated. He expired on the 28th September, 1775, full of years and loaded with the honours of the christian ministry.

During a long life he took an active part in the ecclesiastical proceedings of the religious association with which he was connected. As he was a regular attendant upon the church courts, so by the wisdom of his counsels he exercised a considerable influence in their deliberations. His pulpit talents were of a superior order. As a preacher, he occupied a place in the foremost rank. Persons who were competent to judge, declared that they had not heard his superior, as to sentiment, composition, or delivery. His authorship was not so extensive as that of the other Fathers of the Secession. The following are the productions of his pen, that have been left behind him. They are neither very numerous nor very bulky.

1. He appears to have prepared the whole of the second part of the Exposition of the Shorter Catechism, which bears his name, besides contributing his share of authorship in the preparation of the first part.

2. The inestimable value of divine truth considered, in a sermon on Prov. xxiii. 23 :—published in 1739.

3. Christ Jesus the Lord considered as the inexhaustible matter of gospel preaching : a sermon preached at the ordination of Mr. Mair at Linton :—published in 1741.

4. A Review of the preface to Mr. Robe's Narrative of the extraordinary work at Kilsyth :—published in 1742.

5. A Review of a pamphlet, entitled, A Serious Enquiry into the Burgess oaths, Edinburgh, Perth, and Glasgow :—published in 1747.

6. A vindication of Mr. Fisher's private missive, published with an answer thereto by Mr. Howe :—published in 1751.

7. The character of a faithful minister of Christ ; a sermon preached at the ordination of Mr. James Erskine at Stirling :—published in 1752.

8. Christ the sole and wonderful doer in the work of man's redemption ; a sermon on Judges xiii. 19 :—published in 1755.

9. The doors of the heart summoned to open to the King of glory ; a sermon on Psalm xxiv. 7 :—published in 1755.

#### REV. RALPH ERSKINE, A.M., DUNFERMLINE.

Mention has already been made of the parentage of this individual, in the biographical account which has been given of his brother Ebenezer. He was a younger son of Mr. Henry Erskine, minister at Chirnside, and of his second wife

Margaret Halcro. He was born on the 15th of March, 1685, at the village of Monilaws, in the county of Northumberland. His education was directed in early life, with a view to the holy ministry. While he was yet a boy, he was deprived by death of his excellent father. It is probable that so long as his father lived, he received the elements of his education from him at Chirnside, and that after his father died he was sent to school in some of the neighbouring towns. In the month of November, 1699, he entered the university of Edinburgh. During his first session at college he experienced a remarkable instance of the divine goodness in preserving his life. A great fire took place in Parliament Square; and the house in which he lodged, being in that Square, he narrowly escaped being burnt to death. He had to force his way through the flames, carrying a number of his books. Referring to this deliverance a number of years afterwards, he mentions in his diary, that on a day set apart for private humiliation and prayer, he made it the subject of grateful acknowledgment to God—"I took special notice (says he) of what took place upon my first going to Edinburgh to the college, in the burning of the Parliament Close; and how mercifully the Lord preserved me, when he might have taken me away in my sin, amidst the flames of that burning, which I can say my own sins helped to kindle."

Having devoted four successive sessions to the study of languages and philosophy, he entered upon the study of divinity in the winter of 1704. While engaged in prosecuting his theological studies, a considerable part of his time was spent in the family of Colonel Erskine of Cardross, in the capacity of tutor. He was at this period the subject of deep serious impressions: and he experienced a great tenderness of conscience, in reference to the manner of discharging the duty which he owed to the young pupils committed to his charge:—"I was made to beg (he says) that the Lord would assist and direct me in my carriage with respect to the family, and the children committed to my custody in some measure, praying that the Lord might take the glory of all to himself, by helping me to my work, and profiting the children."

On the 8th of June, 1709, he was licensed by the presbytery of Dunfermline to preach the gospel; and soon after he preached his first public sermon, in the church of Culross, from 2 Cor. iii. 5, 'But our sufficiency is of God.' He was much esteemed, as a preacher, both by ministers and people. He received, in 1711, a unanimous call from the parish of Tulliallan to become their minister; and, nearly at the same time, he received a call to become second minister in the collegiate charge of Dunfermline. Notwithstanding the prospect

of greater labour, and inferior emolument, he was induced to prefer the call to Dunfermline. His ordination took place on the 7th of August, in the year now mentioned. Mr. James Cuthbert, minister of Culross, preached and presided on the occasion. About four years and a-half after his ordination, Mr. Thomas Buchanan, his colleague, died, and he was promoted to the first charge. He laboured with great assiduity and faithfulness in his ministerial work. He devoted a considerable portion of time to reading and study, with a view to his own improvement; while he was, at the same time, most exemplary in performing all the duties, public and private, incumbent on him as a minister of the gospel. The parish, over the spiritual interests of which he presided, was large and populous; and, what with ministerial visitation, diets of examination, preaching on the Sabbath and during the week, and the performance of other ministerial duties, his bodily and mental powers were tasked to the utmost.

In the Marrow controversy, to which allusion has already been made in the previous notices, Mr. Erskine took a deep interest; and he had his full share of obloquy and of toil in the prosecution of it. The Synod of Fife, of which he was a member, were peculiarly strict in enforcing compliance with the act of Assembly, passed in 1720, prohibiting all ministers from recommending the Marrow "either by printing, writing, or preaching." As he did not choose to comply with this prohibition, he was formally arraigned before the Synod for non-compliance, and strictly charged to be more obedient for the future, on pain of being subjected to censure. The Synod further required that he, as well as the other Marrow-men within their bounds, should subscribe anew the Confession of Faith, in a sense agreeably to the Assembly's deed of 1720. Mr. Erskine refused to submit to this injunction—but professed his readiness to subscribe anew the Confession of Faith, as received by the Church of Scotland in 1647.

Concerning the act of Assembly, 1732, with respect to the planting of vacant churches, he held the same sentiments as those of his brother Ebenezer; and when the overture was under the consideration of the Assembly he spake against it. Though he was not at first associated with the four brethren, with whom the Secession originated, yet he was not an unconcerned spectator of the proceedings that were adopted in reference to these brethren. He gave them both his sympathy and his co-operation, as appears from the following paper which he and Mr. Thomas Mair presented to the Commission in November, 1733:—"Though we had no occasion regularly to sign the same papers with these brethren, yet not

only did some of us, as well as others present at the last General Assembly, openly and judiciously adhere to the protestation and declaration given in by them, as containing a testimony against the act of Assembly, 1732, anent planting vacant churches, and as asserting our privilege and duty to testify publicly against the same, or like defections, on all proper occasions; but also at the last Commission, met in August, offered our verbal adherence, as several others did, unto the protestation these brethren entered against the sentence of the Commission, suspending them from the exercise of their ministry: whereby we intended to testify our concurrence with, and adherence unto, the several representations given in by them to the Commission under form of instrument."

Mr. Erskine went along with his brother Ebenezer, to the meeting that was held, in the month of December, at Gairney Bridge—but did not take any part in the proceedings of the brethren that were there assembled. In his diary he alludes to this meeting in the following terms:—"Monday, December 3d, 1733.—This night my brother came; and the next day, Tuesday, Dec. 4th, I went with him to the Bridge of Gairney, where he and his other three brethren spent all the Wednesday in prayer and conference, and also the Thursday: and thereafter, about two o'clock, came to the resolution of constituting themselves into a Presbytery, which accordingly they did, and Mr. Mair and I were witnesses. There was, I thought, much of the Lord with them; and I found my heart frequently warmed and drawn out in prayer with them. They appointed their next meeting of Presbytery to be in Dunfermline, February, the first Wednesday thereof. We returned to Dunfermline on Friday, and I went with him to Stirling on Saturday, and came there that night."—On the Sabbath following, Mr. Erskine preached in his brother's pulpit, on Psalm lvi. 10. "Thou hast tried us as silver is tried."

On the 18th of Feb., 1737, Mr. Erskine gave in a formal accession to the Associate Presbytery. Ever since the Secession had taken place, he had shown himself friendly to it,—but had felt considerable hesitation in his mind about leaving the national church. He had cherished the hope that a better spirit would preside over its councils, and he had waited for several years in the expectation of seeing a reformation taking place. But finding that the ruling party, instead of retracing their steps, continued to pursue their headlong career, he at length formed the resolution of abandoning their communion, and joining himself to the Seceding brethren.—"This step," he says, "was indeed extraordinary and all

my light in it was drawn from the testimony for truth, and against the errors and defections of the church: which testimony I had plainly essayed to lift up in a way of communion with the church judicatories, until I myself was left alone, Mr. Mair being enlightened to leave the judicatories entirely. I thought it were my *sin*, if I did not take the opportunity of emitting to this, and transmitting to the rising generation the same testimony more fully, and that in a formal judicial way; since I had this occasion of doing so. Lord help!"

At the meeting of Assembly, in May 1740, Mr. Erskine was deposed from the office of the ministry, along with the other Seceding brethren. But he continued to occupy the parish church, for a period of two years after his deposition. In the expectation of his being deposed, and eventually thrust out of his church, a subscription had been commenced in the parish with a view to the erection of a new place of worship. The people gave willingly. A liberal sum was raised,—and a place of worship, capable of containing two thousand persons, was erected, where Mr. Erskine continued to officiate during the remainder of his ministry. The testimonies of their attachment, which his people gave him at the time of his deposition, were peculiarly gratifying to him. In an address, which he delivered to them about this period, he said,—“I find at present in this congregation the generality of the people therein giving such an evidence of their favour towards me as I never expected, never desired, never proposed; nor did it ever enter my head or thought. And I own I should be very ungrateful, if I did not entertain a kindly favour and affection for you. There is another token of your favour to me, that I would desire at your hand; and that is, that you will accept of my message that I have to you from my glorious Lord and Master Jesus Christ, by coming to him for salvation to your soul; that you match with him as your head and husband, your friend and father, and come to him for grace and glory, that you may be happy in him, in life and death, judgment and eternity.”

The goodness of the cause, in which the Secession ministers were embarked attracted toward them the sympathy of a large portion of the pious and intelligent throughout the land. Crowds flocked from all quarters, to their sacramental occasions. These were, to not a few, seasons of holy enjoyment. The following instances, mentioned by Mr. Erskine in his diary, are worthy of being extracted,—as tending to show the spirit that prevailed among the people at that period:—“Sabbath, July 10, 1737. The sacrament was in Dunfermline; and I preached half an hour before the action began, about

half before eight in the morning, upon Matt. iii. 17. The tables began to be served a little after nine, and continued till about twelve at night, there being betwixt four and five thousand communicants. I hear from several hands that the Lord owned the occasion." "Sabbath, Aug. 6, 1738. I was present at the sacrament in Orwell, where a vast multitude were gathered, and upwards of five thousand persons did communicate. I preached Saturday and Sabbath, on Rom. iv. 18. 'Who against hope believed in hope.' Ministers were helped, and many were refreshed." "Saturday, July 14, 1739. Being at Stirling sacrament, I was called to preach Saturday, Sabbath, and Monday; preached all the time on these words, 'Who loved me, and gave himself for me.' The solemn action in one of the churches there fell to me, and the other to my brother Ebenezer. I was helped on the Saturday, and much more on the Sabbath, and most of all on the Monday. Having expected to preach neither on Saturday nor Monday, yet I was strengthened inwardly, and also in serving tables, whereof I served at least twelve, partly in the one church, and partly in the other. On the Monday, both in preaching and praying, I found more than ordinary assistance, and hearty concern for winning souls to Christ. The work was great, and few hands. There were two places of worship on the Saturday, four places on the Sabbath, and three places on the Monday; and there were but seven ministers and three probationers, my brother and Messrs. Wilson, Moncrieff, Thomson, Fisher and myself, with Messrs. James Mair, Hunter, and Young, probationers. The work was very decently gone about, and the Lord was present with the ministers.

Mr. Erskine acted a prominent part in the controversy carried on between the Seceders and the defenders of the "Cambuslang work." On this subject he employed strong condemnatory language in some of the publications that issued from his pen. One of the most celebrated of his works, "Faith no Fancy, or a Treatise of Mental Images," owed its existence to this controversy. This treatise has been admired by many on account of the metaphysical acumen which it displays, and some profess to discover in it the principles on which Dr. Reid's system of mental philosophy is founded. Another of the pamphlets, penned by Mr. Erskine in the course of this controversy, was his "Fraud and Falsehood detected," &c. The severity of its contents may be inferred from the strong language used in its title.

In the keen and protracted controversy, carried on concerning the burgess oath question, Mr. Erskine occupied a place in the foremost rank. Both in the church courts, and through

the medium of the press, he supported the views of those who maintained, that the swearing of the religious clause in the burghess-oath ought not to be made a term of communion. Several pamphlets were published by him on the subject; and like all the other combatants who mingled in this fray, the views which he held were maintained by him with sufficient keenness.

After the division took place in the Associate Synod, Mr. Erskine associated himself with the Burgher section of the Secession. One of the disastrous effects of this strife, in so far as he was personally concerned, was, that a separation in church-fellowship took place between him and his son Mr. John Erskine, minister at Leslie. Though at the period of the division in the Synod, the son took the same side with his father, yet he soon after changed his sentiments and connected himself with the opposite party. The presbytery of Dunfermline, of which both Mr. Erskine and his son were members, at the first meeting which they held after the breach, thought proper to refuse Mr. Erskine and some others a seat amongst them, and expunged their names from the roll, because they would not acknowledge the authority of "the Synod, which met in Mr. Gib's house the 10th of April, 1747."—Mr. Erskine, in a letter which he wrote to one of his sons soon after this transaction, referring to the part which his son John took in it, says,—“He there sat with the Presbytery, which exauctorated me and you, and all the true lawful Synod:” and he adds, “You may be sure, it was as a sword piercing my heart, to see that Johnny was sitting in the midst of them.”—John wrote a letter to his father, vindicating the course which he had pursued in this business, and stating that it did not proceed from disrespect but from love. In this letter he says,—“I desire through grace to offer up earnest prayers and supplications for you, and that he may do for you for his name's sake; and I am persuaded that this is the case with my brethren also.”—It has been affirmed that this son was employed to pronounce sentence of excommunication against his father. This is not true. The sentence referred to was pronounced at the meeting of Synod in Edinburgh, on the 10th August, 1749, by Mr. George Brown, moderator, and was afterwards intimated, by Mr. Adam Gib, at Dunfermline.

The painful feelings which Mr. Erskine experienced, in consequence of the rupture which had taken place in the Synod and the estrangement of brethren from each other, may be learned from the following extract, taken from a letter which he addressed to his son Henry:—“You sympathize with me, as I desire to sympathize with you in our present

perplexities. It is good our Lord and Master is always the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever. Let us bear his indignation, because we have sinned against him, till he arise and plead our cause, and let us be confident in him, and trust in him, though he should slay us.—God is trying us, but when he has tried, we shall come forth as gold. Let us say, Lord, is it I that have raised this storm of wrath? But let us hope, that in due time he will lay the storm with a word, and make darkness light, and crooked things straight. ‘Turn us again, O Lord God of hosts, and cause thy face to shine, and we shall be saved!’ May the Lord be with you and us, and we shall fear no evil, when going through this dark valley!”

Mr. Erskine did not long survive the events now recorded. He had now descended into the vale of years, and the infirmities of age were gaining fast upon him. During the short period he survived the breach, he was actively engaged in promoting the interests of that portion of the Secession Church with which he was connected. A proposal being made in the Burgher Synod to enlarge the psalmody, Mr. Erskine was requested to undertake a metre translation of the songs in scripture, with the exception of the Psalms of David. His son James was licensed, in 1750, to preach the gospel—and soon after his licence the congregation of Dunfermline gave him an unanimous call to be colleague and successor to his father. But Mr. Erskine sustained a severe disappointment in this matter; for his son having received calls from the congregations of Stirling and Dundee, the Synod appointed him to be ordained as colleague to his uncle in Stirling.

In the end of October, 1752, he was suddenly seized with fever, which proved fatal in the course of eight days. He expired on the 6th of November, in the 68th year of his age and the 42d of his ministry. His son Henry, in a letter addressed to a relative, giving an account of his father's death, says,—“He preached here last Sabbath save one with very remarkable life and fervency. He spoke but little all the time, that the disease did not evidently appear to be present death approaching; the physicians having ordered care to be taken to keep him quiet. But after he had taken the remarkable and sudden change to the worse, which was not till Sabbath, he then spoke a great deal, but could not be understood. Only among his last words he was heard to say, ‘I will be for ever a debtor to free grace.’” Mr. Whitefield, giving an account of the last expressions of several dying Christians, in a sermon preached from Isa. lx. 19, says, “Thus died Mr. Ralph Erskine. His last words were, ‘Victory, victory, victory!’”

Mr. Erskine, as a preacher, is described as having “a plea-

sant voice, an agreeable manner, a warm and pathetic address." In his public appearances, he endeavoured to adapt himself to the capacity of his audience; and, instead of using the 'enticing words of man's wisdom,' he addressed to them the truths of the gospel, in their genuine purity and simplicity. His style of preaching was, in a high degree, evangelical and experimental. Mr. Fisher of Glasgow says concerning him: "He had a dexterous faculty in ransacking the plagues of the heart, and describing the diversified circumstances of serious and exercised souls, as if they had fully communicated to him their several doubts and cases; while, in the mean time, he was only unfolding the inward experience of his own soul, what he himself felt of the workings of unbelief, and of the powerful influence of the Holy Spirit in opposition thereunto."

As an author, Mr. Erskine's publications are both more numerous and more diversified than those of any of his compeers in the Secession Church. His works give decided indication of a vigorous mind, and show that he possessed a considerable versatility of talent. In general literary attainments, he appears to have been far in advance of the mass of Scottish ministers who lived at that period. Acuteness of thought, energy of expression, and richness of imagination, characterize his productions. It is easy to perceive that, possessing, as he did, a well-cultivated mind, an elevated piety, a glowing fancy, and an animated address, he must have been not only a popular, but a most useful and effective preacher.

During the early period of his ministry, he published his *Gospel Sonnets*, or *Spiritual Songs*, in six parts; namely, the *Believer's Espousals*, *Jointure*, *Riddle*, *Lodging*, *Soliloquy*, and *Principles*. This work was published at first anonymously; but was afterwards enlarged and published with his name. It has gone through a vast number of editions, and been extensively circulated both in Britain and America. Christians of all denominations have borne testimony to its excellence. Mr. Andrew Fuller of Kettering, giving an account of his early religious impressions, refers to it in the following terms: "One day, in particular, I took up Ralph Erskine's *Gospel Sonnets*, and opening upon what he entitles, 'A Gospel Catechism for young Christians, or Christ all in all, and our complete redemption,' I read, and, as I read, I wept. Indeed, I was almost overcome with weeping, so interesting did the doctrine of eternal salvation appear to me." During the last illness of the celebrated Mr. Hervey of Weston-Favel, "a pious gentleman from Glasgow, concerned in the publication of Ralph Erskine's works, in folio, waited on him for a recommendation of them. He was not able to write, but dictated one to the gentleman. Having

asked what the intended edition would cost, it was answered, 'two guineas.' Mr. Hervey, pointing to the Gospel Sonnets, which lay on his table, and had been much blessed to him during his weakness, replied, '*There is a production of Mr. Erskine, I value more than two guineas.*'"

Soon after the Gospel Sonnets, he published another poem, entitled, "A Paraphrase, or Large Explicatory Poem, upon the Song of Solomon." The object of the poem is to give, in an agreeable form, a plain and evangelical exposition of that portion of scripture. Another poetical work of his, namely, his Scripture Songs, was commenced by him, in compliance with a recommendation of the Associate Synod, with a view to the enlargement of the psalmody. The completion of the design was interrupted by his death. Some of these Songs were given by him to the world, before he died; but the publication is chiefly posthumous.

As has been already stated, Mr. Erskine took a prominent part in the controversy concerning the revival work at Camusbang, and at other places in the west of Scotland. The controversial tracts which he published on this subject were, *Fraud and Falsehood detected, &c. and Faith no Fancy, or a Treatise of mental images.* The controversial pamphlets, which he published on the burghess-oath question, were,—1. *The Narrative of the Separation*:—2. *The lawfulness of the religious clause of some burghess-oaths asserted*:—3. *Fancy no faith, or a seasonable admonition and information to Seceders*:—4. *Observations upon the conduct of the separating brethren, with Fancy still no faith*:—5. *Third proof of Fancy no faith; with a fourth proof of Fancy no faith*:—6. *A Review of Mr. Gib's Remarks against the Synodical fast, June 2d, 1748.* These are all his controversial pamphlets, the titles of which I have been able to ascertain.

His other works consist of sermons, a considerable number of which were published, in separate pamphlets, during his lifetime; and, being much relished by the people, they passed through successive editions. Some time after his death, they were collected together, and, along with a number of other sermons, and some of his poetical pieces, were published in two folio volumes, by his son-in-law Mr. John Newlands, bookseller in Glasgow. The first volume appeared in 1764, and the second in the year following. To this edition Mr. Fisher of Glasgow prefixed "*A Short Account of the Author.*" In 1794, a new edition of Mr. Erskine's practical works, in ten octavo volumes, was published at Falkirk. Several editions, in a similar form, have been published since that period; and have had a most extensive circulation, both in our own and in other countries.

## REV. ADAM GIB, EDINBURGH.

The name of Adam Gib is nearly as familiar in the early history of the Secession Church, as the names either of the Erskines, the Wilsons, the Fishers, or Moncrieffs; and though he cannot, properly speaking, be considered as ranking amongst the Fathers of the Secession, yet he deserves to have a place assigned him in this record, next to these honoured individuals. Mr. Gib was born at Castletown, in the parish of Muckhart, on the 7th of April, 1714. He was the ninth son of Mr. John Gib, proprietor of the estate now mentioned. His father intended him for the medical profession, and sent him to be educated at the university of Edinburgh, under the superintendence of his uncle, Mr. Gib, surgeon in that city. Young Gib was peculiarly attached to mathematical studies,—and was a favourite scholar of the celebrated Professor M'Laurin, father of Lord Dreghorn. At this period of his life, as he one day walked down the West-Bow, engaged in deep meditation on a mathematical problem, he found himself in the midst of a crowd of people, who were assembled in the Grass-market to witness the execution of a criminal, who was suspended directly before him. The question then presented itself forcibly to his mind:—"Will the subject, which now so entirely engrosses my attention, prepare me for eternity?" It is believed, that this was the first occasion on which he felt anxiety about another world. The subject took a deep hold of his mind. He was sensible that his past conduct must have been, in many respects, displeasing to a holy God; and he resolved to commence a new course of life. He formed resolutions for the future regulation of his conduct,—but found that he could not adhere to them. He lived retired, that he might not be exposed to temptation. He wrote out rules for his guidance and signed them with his own blood; but still he was unable to act up to them. As a last resource, he resolved to retire to some desert island, where no temptation could exist to lead him astray; and he was for some time occupied in making preparation to carry this intention into effect. It was then that the entrance of the word into his mind gave him light: and this was brought about by the perusal of Luther's work on the Galatians. The introduction to that work, it is supposed, brought him first to the knowledge of the truth.

His mind was now so deeply impressed with the importance of those truths, which have a reference to another world, that instead of prosecuting his medical studies, he resolved to devote himself to the service of Christ, in the work of the ministry.

His classical studies, so far as he had advanced in them, were fitted to prepare him, in nearly an equal extent, for either of the two professions.

During the period of his attendance at the university of Edinburgh, he was in the habit of attending the meetings of the General Assembly and of their Commission,—and was so disgusted with their arbitrary and unscriptural proceedings, that so early as the winter of 1732, before the Secession had commenced, he formed the resolution of having no connection with the judicatories of the Established Church. This resolution was greatly strengthened by the proceedings which took place soon after this, in reference to his native parish. Muckhart, where the Rev. Mr. Rennie was intruded in the face of an obstinate resistance, on the part of nearly the whole of the parishioners. Mr. Gib took an active part in opposing this settlement. He attended a meeting of the Synod of Perth and Stirling, in the month of October, 1735, when Mr. Rennie was enrolled as minister of the parish of Muckhart, and he laid on the Synod's table a declaration of secession from them and from all the other judicatories of the Established Church. A similar declaration of secession was given in, at the same time, by commissioners from the parish. Having obtained from the Synod clerk an extract of these declarations, Mr. Gib and the Muckhart commissioners attended a meeting of the Associate Presbytery, in the month of December following, and laid the extract on the Presbytery's table, with a formal declaration of accession to them. This was the first accession which the Presbytery received from members of the Established Church.

Though Mr. Gib had formed the resolution of devoting himself to the work of the ministry, yet his mind was occasionally harassed with doubts regarding his call to this particular duty, and his qualifications for the office. He suffered also considerable mental distress from gloomy apprehensions, which he entertained with regard to his future happiness. In afterwards describing what was his state of mind at this period, he said that he felt as if tossed about in the midst of a raging ocean, of unknown extent, with a knowledge that a harbour existed somewhere, which if reached would afford both security and happiness; but he knew neither in what direction to look for it, nor the means of reaching it even if known. This state of mind continued between the years 1736 and 1740,—during which period he made repeated application for advice to the Rev. William Wilson of Perth, and received from him counsel and encouragement.

On the 5th of March, 1740, he was licensed to preach the gospel by the Associate Presbytery in the West Kirk of

Stirling. Soon after his licence he received a call from the congregation of Edinburgh,—and another from the congregation of Stitchell. The call from the former of these congregations was preferred by the Associate Presbytery; and he was ordained minister of the associate congregation of Edinburgh on the 2d of April, 1741.

Mr. Gib's father was much displeased with him for abandoning the medical profession and devoting himself to the work of the ministry. He even refused to hear him preach for some time after he was licensed. So entirely, however, was this feeling of displeasure removed before the father's death, that, being dissatisfied with the habits of his eldest son, he executed a deed disinheriting him, and settling the estate of Castletown on the subject of this memoir. When the repositories of the father were opened after his funeral—and when, to the great disappointment of the eldest son, the deed of settlement was read—Mr. Gib asked his brother, if he would engage to change his mode of life on condition of the estate being restored to him. He answering in the affirmative, Mr. Gib said, that he would do what his father would have done in these circumstances; and he immediately destroyed the deed, in the presence of the company, by putting it into the fire.

Mr. Gib was twice married. His first wife was Mrs. Hannah Erskine, daughter of Colonel Erskine of Balgonie, and widow of Mr. Cunningham of Comrie. His second wife was Emily M'George, daughter of Mr. M'George of Corblet, in Kirkcudbrightshire, and a grand-daughter of Mr. John Hepburn, minister of Urr, who suffered imprisonment, on account of his religious opinions, both before and after the Revolution. This Mr. Hepburn was a descendant of Adam Hepburn, who was Bishop of Ross during the reign of James the Sixth. Mr. Hepburn became a convert to presbyterianism in the time of Charles the Second, and was disinherited by his father in consequence. He then left the north country, and came to the neighbourhood of Dumfries, and was finally settled as minister of the parish of Urr. Being imprisoned on one occasion in the tolbooth of Edinburgh, he showed himself possessed of a spirit that was not likely to yield to oppression, by preaching from the jail window to the people that were assembled in the street beneath. A daughter of Nisbet of Dirleton, who was Lord Advocate during part of the reign of Charles the Second, was passing at the time, and was so struck by the appearance of the preacher and his situation, as well as by the subject of his discourse, that an acquaintance commenced between them, which issued in their marriage,—and Mrs. Gib was their grand-daughter.

Mr. Gib took an active part in the support of the existing government, during the rebellion in 1745. He was the means of raising several companies of volunteers in his own congregation, for the defence of the capital; and during its occupation by the Highland army, he removed with his congregation to Dreghorn, near Colington, and there he prayed publicly for the reigning sovereign, even in presence of soldiers belonging to the Highland army.

When the disputes arose in the Associate Synod, concerning the swearing of the religious clause in some of the burgessoaths, Mr. Gib entered keenly into the controversy. He supported the views of those who maintained that the swearing of this clause was inconsistent with the public profession of Seceders. When the division took place in the Synod, it was to his house that those brethren retired who did not approve of the swearing of this clause being made a matter of forbearance;—and in his house, immediately after the division took place, was the first meeting of the Antiburgher Synod held. The deep interest which Mr. Gib took in the prosperity of that section of the Secession with which he was connected, and the exertions which he made in its behalf, may be learned from the preceding history. He was held in high respect by the religious community to which he belonged. When the Rev. Alexander Moncrieff of Abernethy died, the Synod were desirous that Mr. Gib should officiate as Professor; but he declined accepting of the office.

During the last years of his life, he suffered severely from the gout, owing in a great measure to his sedentary habits; and the disease at last proved fatal to him. He died on the 18th of June, 1788, in the seventy-fifth year of his age, and the forty-eighth of his ministry. His remains were interred in Greyfriars' churchyard, Edinburgh.

Mr. Gib was a person of an ardent temperament, and zealous for the maintenance of what he conceived to be the truth. He was much engaged in the controversies of the period in which he lived. His writings furnish ample evidence of the polemical tendencies of his nature. They offered proof of a vigorous mind, and show that he possessed a wide range of information. In the controversial warfare in which he was frequently engaged, he displayed a courage that was not easily daunted, and showed himself to be an antagonist that was by no means to be trifled with. The following are the productions which issued from his pen, so far as I have been able to ascertain:

1. A pamphlet in the controversy concerning Whitefield and the "Cumbuslang Work." A copy of this pamphlet I have not been able to find, and am unable to give the title of it. It was published probably in 1742.

2. The proceedings of the Associate Synod at Edinburgh, concerning some ministers who have separated from them. Published in 1748.

3. A solemn warning, by the Associate Synod in Scotland; addressed to persons of all ranks in Great Britain and Ireland. Published in 1758.

4. An Address to the Associate Synod, met at Edinburgh, October 11, 1759, concerning a petition and reasons laid before them by the Rev. Alexander Moncrieff, &c. Published in 1763.

5. An Exposition of a false and abusive libel, entitled, "The procedure of the Associate Synod in Mr. Pirie's case represented," &c. Published in 1764.

6. A Refuge of lies swept away: In an Answer to a most false and abusive libel lately published by Thomas Kinnear, &c. Published in 1768.

7. The present truth: A Display of the Secession Testimony in the three periods of the rise, state, and maintenance of the Testimony. 2 vols. 8vo. 1774.

8. A sermon from John ix. 35, entitled: An antidote against a new heresy concerning the true Sonship of Jesus Christ. Published in 1777.

9. *Vindiciæ Dominicæ*: A Defence of the reformation standards of the Church of Scotland, concerning the administration of the Lord's Supper, and the one Sonship of Jesus Christ. Published in 1778.

10. An account of the Burgher Re-exhibition of the Secession Testimony. Published in 1780.

11. An Exposition of some late reveries concerning the Sonship of Christ. Published in 1780.

12. A memorial and remonstrance, read before the Associate Synod, at Edinburgh, May 2, 1782, relative to a printed sermon which had been preached before them. Published in 1784.

13. Sacred contemplations; In three parts: containing, 1. A view of the covenant of works; 2. A view of the covenant of grace; 3. A view of the absolute and immediate dependence of all things on God. Published in 1786.

This work—consisting of a thick octavo volume—he says, was executed by him in the seventy-third year of his age. As it was the last, so it may be regarded as the most useful of his publications. In the preface he says: "I will leave it behind me as a summary (especially in the second part) of that gospel which I have been preaching; and as a testimony for truth against the present flood of errors,—in opposition likewise to many misapprehensions which generally prevail: desirous and hopeful that I may be useful by it, after having finished my course."

## REV. JOHN SWANSTON, KINROSS.

The name of Mr. Swanston justly deserves a place in this record,—not so much on account of his authorship, as on account of the eminence which he attained in the religious community to which he belonged. Any fame which he acquired as an author was posthumous: but his theological and literary attainments were such as to procure for him the most honourable distinction which his brethren in the ministry could confer upon him, namely, appointing him to be their Professor of Divinity. He deserves, therefore, to be commemorated in connexion with the literature of the Secession.

Mr. Swanston was born at Hume, in the parish of Stitchell, on the 6th of November, 1720. His father occupied a farm under the Earl of Home. His ancestors had been for several generations in the same place. He possessed good natural talents, and gave early indications of an aptness for learning. He was just merging into manhood when the Secession commenced, and he hesitated for some time whether he would join its ranks, or continue in connexion with the Established Church. After mature deliberation, he made the same choice that thousands of his countrymen did at the time, and cast in his lot with the Secession. He prosecuted his literary and philosophical studies at the University of Edinburgh; and afterwards attended the Secession Divinity Hall, under the superintendence of the Rev. Mr. Wilson, at Perth.

He was licensed to preach the gospel, by the Associate Presbytery, in 1743. Soon after his licence, he received two calls; one from the congregation of Stitchell, and the other from the congregation of Urr, in Galloway. The competition between these two places was decided, by the Presbytery, in favour of the last-mentioned congregation; but (for what reason I am unable to mention), he was not ordained in either of these congregations. He continued still to be a probationer, when the breach took place in the Associate Synod in 1747. On that occasion he adhered, as a preacher, to the Burgher section of the Secession. Soon after the rupture, he was sent, by the Burgher Synod, on a mission to Ireland. At that time there were only three congregations in Ireland adhering to this portion of the Secession. Two of these—Killenny and Balleranny—gave each a call to Mr. Swanston to be their minister. But, before setting out on his Irish mission, he had received an unanimous call from the congregation of Kinross in Scotland; and he was ordained in this place on the 24th of June, 1848.

This congregation was in its infancy when Mr. Swanston

was settled amongst them, the members composing it having been lately disjoined from the congregation of Orwell. But, under the ministry of such an individual, their numbers speedily increased. His prudence, his talents, and his ministerial deportment, commanded the esteem and respect, not only of the members of his flock, but of all classes in the town and neighbourhood. He was singularly prudent in his conduct, an able preacher, and dignified in his manners. He was, at the same time, amiable, affable, and kind. One of his flock, who long survived him, gave to a minister the following brief but pithy description of his character: "Mr. Swanston was like a god amongst us." After his ordination he devoted much of his time to reading, meditation, and prayer. He applied himself diligently to the study of the Sacred Oracles. His favourite authors in theology were Dr. Owen, Dr. Goodwin, Bishop Reynolds, Messrs. Trail, Boston, &c. He was, at the same time, most diligent in preaching, in catechising, and in the visitation of his flock and of the sick.

When the theological chair became vacant by the resignation of Mr. Fisher of Glasgow, Mr. Swanston was called upon by the suffrages of his brethren to occupy it. He was elected Professor of Divinity on the 8th of May, 1764. During the short period he officiated as Professor, he commanded the respect and attachment of the students, by the affectionate and dignified manner in which he discharged the duties of his office. He exerted himself to promote their improvement, and took a deep interest in every thing connected with their welfare. The church, however, was not permitted long to enjoy his valuable services. Scarcely three years elapsed, after his appointment to the Professorship, when his days were cut short in the very midst of his career of usefulness.

He had gone to assist at the dispensation of the Lord's Supper at Perth. On the Sabbath evening of the communion (7th June, 1767), he preached from these words, Eph. i. 6. 'To the praise of the glory of his grace.' He was seized that same evening with an inflammation in the bowels. The disease was so violent and rapid in its progress, that it was found impossible to remove him to his family at Kinross. All that friendship and medical skill could do for him was in vain. He was lodged in the house of a near relative, and received all the sympathy and attention which his situation required. He beheld the approach of the last enemy with calmness and fortitude. In the near and certain prospect of entering the eternal world, he bore testimony to the sovereignty and riches of that grace which, during his ministerial course, he had preached with so much fidelity and earnestness to

others. "I believe," said he, "that through the grace of our Lord Jesus I shall be saved. I shall not die, but live in the highest sense, and hope to declare the works of the Lord eternally." Addressing himself to those who stood around his bed, he said to them, only a few minutes before he breathed his last, "I would not now return to life for ten thousand worlds; for though my heart and my flesh fail me, God is the strength of my heart and my portion for ever." On Friday morning (the 12th) he fell asleep in Jesus, in the forty-sixth year of his age, and the nineteenth of his ministry. Cut off in the vigour of manhood, and in the prime of his usefulness, his premature death was mourned, not only by the congregation over whose spiritual interests he presided, but by the religious community of which he was a distinguished ornament.

"He was possessed," says one who was his intimate friend, "of singular natural parts; being furnished with a quick discernment, great strength of memory and judgment, and with rich invention. Such was his modesty, that on every occasion he rather concealed than showed his abilities, unless when necessarily engaged in the defence of truth."—"In his Christian behaviour he was very tender and circumspect, showing himself a pattern of good works. Being made an able minister of the New Testament, by a large measure of gifts and graces conferred upon him, he improved these talents to the last, as a workman who needeth not be ashamed, having a deep sense of the obligations he was under to serve his Master, and of the worth of immortal souls committed to his charge."

Mr. Swanston never published anything during his lifetime; but a volume of his sermons was published after his death. The volume made its appearance in 1773. A short account of the author was prefixed by the Rev. Mr. Smith of Dunfermline. These sermons have been very much esteemed by those who set a value on the marrow of the gospel. The principal topics discussed in them are the riches of grace, the Sun of righteousness, Christ crucified, and antidotes to slavish fear.

#### MR. ANDREW SWANSTON.

The subject of this notice was the eldest son of Professor Swanston of Kinross. He was instructed in the knowledge of the Latin at the grammar-school of Perth, and afterwards prosecuted his studies at the University of Edinburgh. Having completed his college curriculum, he studied theology under Professor Brown of Haddington. He was a young man of

promising talents and of elevated piety. After he had completed his course of study at the Divinity Hall, he was taken on trials for licence by the presbytery of Dunfermline; and the discourses which he delivered were in a high degree satisfactory. But at this period he became deeply impressed with the high responsibility connected with the ministerial office, and with a sense of his own unworthiness. He experienced for some time great distress of mind. The idea of becoming a preacher of the gospel was abandoned by him, and his attention was wholly occupied with an overwhelming concern about the salvation of his soul. He trembled to look into the Bible, lest he should there read his doom; and he refrained from prayer and other religious duties, lest, by engaging in them, he should only aggravate his guilt.

After continuing for some time in this distressed state of mind, it pleased God to grant him deliverance. He obtained such a view of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ, that his fears were dissipated, and he was filled with peace and joy. Writing to a friend (December 4, 1778), he refers, in the following terms, to this happy change which he had undergone: "My dear friend, you know what desperate conclusions I was wont on some occasions to draw against myself, and how positive I was in them; yet, through the goodness of God, I have lived to see that they are groundless; and, however defective my past experience or present exercises may be, I am fully convinced that it is my duty to believe that, through the grace of God, I shall be saved even as others. I doubt not but that what I have mentioned will give you real pleasure, and you will be disposed to glorify God in me."

He was now prevailed upon to accept of licence, and his labours as a preacher were highly acceptable. The congregation of Perth, in connexion with the Burgher Synod, gave him an unanimous call to be their minister. But he was not ordained amongst them. He began to entertain doubts on the subject of the presbyterian form of church-government, also concerning infant baptism. The consequence was, that he renounced his connexion with the Secession church, and connected himself with the society of the Baptists.

He continued for some time labouring in his Master's service as a preacher of the gospel, without any fixed charge. While thus engaged, he caught a severe cold which issued in consumption; and his constitution, which was never at any time vigorous, gradually gave way under the fatal disease. He terminated his earthly course at Glasgow, on the 15th of November, 1784, in the thirty-third year of his age. The last words he was heard to utter were, "All is well, all is well."

The following opinion, expressed by the late Dr. Lawson of Selkirk, concerning this excellent person, shows the high estimation in which Mr. Swanston was held by those who were acquainted with him. He said, "that next to Jonathan, he believed Mr. Andrew Swanston to be the most amiable man that ever lived."

Mr. Swanston's friends published, some time after his death, two volumes of his sermons and lectures, selected from his manuscripts. The first volume was published in 1800, and the second in 1803. A short memoir of the author was prefixed to them by his intimate friend, the late Mr. Greig, minister at Lochgelly.

REV. JOHN BROWN, HADDINGTON.

The life of Professor Brown furnishes a remarkable instance of what may be accomplished by industry and perseverance. Few individuals have acquired such an honourable celebrity, either as a minister of the gospel, or as a religious writer, who enjoyed such scanty advantages for literary improvement as he did. He was born of humble but religious parents, in the year 1722. His birth-place was Carpow, a small village in the county of Perth. He was taught, in his boyhood, the fear of God, and had a good example set before him by his pious parents. But they were both removed from him at an early period. He had scarcely reached the eleventh year of his age when his father died,—and his mother did not long survive. "I was left," says he, "a poor orphan, and had nothing to depend on but the providence of God."

The poverty of his parents did not permit them to continue him long at school. He received some slight knowledge of reading, writing, and arithmetic: and *one month at school*, without his parents allowance, he bestowed upon the Latin. This appears to have been the whole literary education which he received, in so far as schools and universities were concerned. But he had, in early life, an insatiable thirst after knowledge, and applied himself with great assiduity to the attainment of it. He took delight in committing to memory the catechisms of Vincent, Flavel, and the Westminster Assembly. He read his Bible and other religious books, such as Alliene's Alarm to the Unconverted, Rutherford's Letters, and Gouge's Directions how to walk with God. He acquired, by dint of study, a knowledge of the Latin, Greek, and Hebrew languages; and in process of time, such were his literary attainments, that he could read and translate the French, Italian, Dutch, German,—also the Arabic, Persic, Syriac, and Ethiopic. The facility with which he acquired

the knowledge of languages, was a matter of astonishment to many, and gave occasion to some to say, that he had Satan for his instructor. In an autobiographical account which he has left of himself, referring to the manner in which he acquired, while a youth, his knowledge of the Latin, Greek, and Hebrew, he says,—“My learning of these languages, without a master, except for one month, occasioned my obtaining the favour of some, and my meeting with the malice of others. By the last it was represented, that I had certainly got my learning in some *sinful* way; and this groundless calumny spread far and wide. The reproach was exceedingly distressing to me; however, God was gracious, for I enjoyed remarkable mixtures of mercy with the affliction.”

His mind was early impressed with a sense of religion. When he was about eight years of age, he pushed, along with a crowd, into the church of Abernethy on a communion Sabbath. It was common, at that period, to exclude all but intended communicants during the time of the table services. Before young Brown was excluded, he heard one or two tables served by a minister, who spake of Christ in such terms of commendation, that his youthful affections were captivated. Remembering the pleasing impression produced upon his mind on this occasion, he afterwards recorded it as his opinion, that children should never be kept out of the church on such occasions. After the death of his parents, his lot was cast in a family where he did not enjoy the same religious advantages as formerly. This had a deteriorating influence upon him,—and he pursued, for a season, a course of backsliding. But in the nineteenth year of his age he was seized with a fever, which was the means of arousing him to a serious concern about his salvation. After his recovery, he heard a sermon preached on John vi. 64, ‘There are some of you that believe not,’—almost every sentence of it went to his conscience, as if it had been addressed exclusively to himself. He looked upon himself as one of the chief of sinners, and was thrown into an agony of mind. On the following day, he heard a sermon preached by the Rev. Adam Gib, on Isa. liii. 4, ‘Surely he hath borne our griefs and carried our sorrows.’—“This (says he) enlightened and melted my heart in a way that I had never before felt. I was made, as a poor lost sinner, as the chief of sinners, to essay appropriating the Lord Jesus as having done all for *me*, and as wholly made over to *me*, in the gospel, as the free gift of God; and as my all-sufficient Saviour, answerable to all my folly, ignorance, guilt, filth, slavery, and misery.”

He kept for some time a school at Gairney Bridge,—a place memorable in the annals of the Secession, as being the spot

where the Associate Presbytery was first constituted. While residing at this place, he attended the ministry of Mr. Ralph Erskine of Dunfermline. He ever afterwards looked back with pleasure on the days when he travelled over the hills of Cleish to hear "that great man of God,"—"whose sermons," said he, "I thought were brought home by the Spirit of God to my heart; at these times I thought I met with the God of Israel, and saw him face to face."

In the year 1748, Mr. Brown entered on the study of divinity, in connexion with the Associate (Burgher) Synod. Mr. Erskine affectionately recommended him to the Synod, when it met at Falkirk that year. Dr. Fraser, in his *Life of Ralph Erskine*, states, "that when Mr. Erskine was introducing Mr. Brown to the brethren at Falkirk, one of them proposed an objection, founded on the absurd calumny that he had got his learning from the devil; but Ralph replied, 'I think the lad has a sweet savour of Christ about him.'"

His study of divinity was conducted under Mr. Ebenezer Erskine—and latterly under Mr. Fisher of Glasgow. From what has been already stated, it may be inferred that he was a diligent student. History and divinity constituted his favourite reading. "He abridged the whole of the *Ancient Universal History*, though it consisted of twenty large octavo volumes. In divinity, he chiefly perused the writings of the best old divines, particularly Turretine, Pictet, Mastricht, and Dr. Owen; also those of the modern, Boston, Erskine, Hervey, &c., but above all he studied the scriptures of truth. His acquaintance with the Bible was singular. Seldom was a text quoted but he could repeat it, explain its meaning, and point out its connexion with the context."

In 1750, he was licensed to preach the gospel; and on the 4th of July, the following year, he was ordained at Haddington. His labours in the ministry were most abundant. During summer, he preached three sermons every Sabbath, besides an expository discourse: in winter he preached two sermons, in addition to the lecture. All the families in his congregation were visited once, and examined twice every year—besides diets of catechising which he frequently held for the young. He rose between four and five in the morning during the summer months,—and at six during the winter,—and continued his studies till eight in the evening;—seldom, if ever, visiting except in the way of duty. His manner of preaching was grave and solemn. He excelled in pointed addresses to the conscience. It is said of a celebrated infidel, that hearing him preach, on a certain occasion, the remark he made concerning him was, that "he preached as if Christ were standing at his elbow." A respectable English

divine, having heard him preach about the year 1770, has recorded his opinion concerning him in the following terms :—  
 “ I well remember a searching sermon he preached from these words, ‘ What went ye out for to see,’ &c. Although at that time I had no experimental acquaintance with the truth as it is in Jesus, yet his grave appearance in the pulpit, his solemn, weighty, and energetic manner of speaking, used to affect me very much. Certainly his preaching was close, and his address to the conscience pungent. Like his Lord and Master, he spake with authority and hallowed pathos, having tasted the sweetness, and felt the power of what he delivered.”

In 1767, Professor Swanston being unexpectedly removed by death, the Associate Synod requested Mr. Brown to take the charge of the students—and in the year following he was formally elected Professor of Divinity. In the preceding chapter, the reader will find an account of the manner in which he conducted the business of the theological class, and of the high estimation in which he was held by the students. This situation he held for a period of twenty years. His piety, and learning, and celebrity as an author, made his name extensively known, not only in Scotland, but also in England and America. He maintained a correspondence with eminent ministers, connected with various denominations. Among the number may be mentioned the Rev. John Mason of New York, the Rev. Mr. Philips of Sarum, and the Rev. Mr. Simeon of Cambridge. He received an invitation from the Dutch Church in New York, to be teacher of divinity among them, which he declined.

After a period of thirty-seven years, usefully and honourably spent in the labours of the Christian ministry, this good man died on the 19th of June, 1787. The last words he was heard to utter, were,—“ My Christ!”—He has left behind him an excellent name among the churches: and, “ though dead, he yet speaketh” by the useful practical writings which, while living, he gave to the world.

As an Author, his works are voluminous. The praise of originality does not belong to him. His fame rests chiefly on the excellent practical tendency of all his writings. Some of them are to be regarded in the light of mere compilations. All of them are pervaded by a high-toned piety. In throwing light upon the Word of God, in illustrating the history of the church, in diffusing evangelical sentiments, and in promoting a spirit of practical godliness, they are calculated to be eminently useful. The industry and research which could accumulate such a mass of miscellaneous materials, as he has done in his various publications, must have been of no ordinary kind.

The following is a correct and complete list of Professor Brown's works, with the order of their publication. When the reader peruses the following list,—and when he is told that the Professor “was accustomed to write his manuscripts several times over, and never employed an amanuensis,” he will feel astonished at the perseverance and industry of the individual, who, amid the incessant labours of the Christian ministry, combined with the arduous duties of a theological professorship, could find leisure for the preparation of so many useful works.

1. A help for the ignorant, being an Essay towards an Easy Explication of the Assembly's Shorter Catechism. 12mo. Edin. 1758.

2. A brief dissertation on Christ's righteousness, showing to what extent it is imputed to us in Justification. 12mo. Edin. 1759.

3. Two short Catechisms mutually connected: the questions of the former being generally supposed and omitted in the latter. 12mo. Edin. 1764.

4. The Christian Journal, or common incidents, spiritual instructors. 12mo. Edin. 1765.

5. A Historical account of the Secession from the Church of Scotland. 8vo. Edin. 1766.

6. Letters on the constitution, discipline, and government of the Christian church. 12mo. Edin. 1767.

7. Sacred Tropology, or a brief view of the figures, and explanation of the metaphors contained in scripture. 12mo. Edin. 1768.

8. Religious steadfastness recommended, a sermon. 12mo. Edin. 1769.

9. A Dictionary of the Holy Bible. 2 vols. 8vo. Edin. 1769.

10. A General History of the Christian Church. 2 vols. 12mo. Edin. 1771.

11. The Psalms of David in metre, with notes exhibiting the connection, explaining the sense, and for directing and animating the devotion. 12mo. Edin. 1775.

12. The Self-Interpreting Bible. 2 vols. 4to. Edin. 1778.

13. The Oracles of Christ, and the abominations of Antichrist, contrasted. 12mo. Glasgow, 1778.

14. The absurdity and perfidy of all authoritative toleration of gross heresy, blasphemy, idolatry, and popery in Britain. 12mo. Glasgow, 1780.

15. The fearful shame and contempt of mere professed Christians, who neglect to raise up spiritual children to Jesus Christ, two sermons. 12mo. Glasgow, 1780.

16. An Evangelical and practical view of the types and figures of the Old Testament dispensation. 12mo. Glasgow, 1781.

17. *The Christian, the student, and the pastor, exemplified in the lives of nine eminent ministers.* Edin. 1782.

18. *The Young Christian exemplified.* 12mo. Glasgow, 1782.

19. *A compendious view of natural and revealed religion, in seven books.* 8vo. Glasgow, 1782.

20. *The necessity and advantage of earnest prayer for the Lord's special direction, in the choice of pastors; with an appendix of free thoughts concerning the transportation of ministers.* Edin. 1783.

21. *A brief Concordance to the Holy Scriptures.* 18mo. Edin. 1783.

22. *Practical Piety exemplified in the lives of thirteen eminent Christians.* 12mo. Glasgow, 1783.

23. *Harmony of Scripture prophecies, and History of their fulfilment.* 8vo. Glasgow, 1784.

24. *A compendious history of the British Churches.* 2 vols. 12mo. 1784.

25. *Thoughts on the travelling of the mail on the Lord's day.* 12mo. 1785.

26. *The Re-exhibition of the Testimony defended.* 8vo. Glasgow.

27. *Devout breathings of a pious soul; with additions and improvements.* Edin.

28. *The necessity, seriousness, and sweetness of practical religion, in an awakening call by Samuel Corbyn; with four solemn addresses to sinners, young and old.*

The following were published after his death:—

29. *Select Remains.* 12mo. London, 1789.

30. *Posthumous Works.* 12mo. Perth, 1797.

31. *An Apology for a more frequent administration of the Lord's Supper; with answers to objections.* 12mo. Edin. 1804.

#### MICHAEL BRUCE, THE POET.

The Secession Church ranks among her sons a few who have acquired celebrity to themselves, and done honour to their country, by the successful cultivation of the muses. In their case, we have not to mourn over the prostitution of eminent gifts, in promoting the cause of infidelity, or in fanning the unhallowed flame of licentious passion. But we behold in them, men who exhibited to the world the gratifying spectacle of genius combined with piety,—men who, while they afforded pleasure to their species, by the sweetness and the richness of the strains which they sung, consecrated their talents to the service of the Redeemer,—and gave proof, by

the excellent tendency of their writings, that the poetical fire which burned within them was kindled at the altar of religion.

With the exception of Ralph Erskine—one of the Fathers of the Secession already noticed—Michael Bruce was the first Seceder who tuned the lyre, so as to arouse the attention and call forth the plaudits of his countrymen. This amiable and gifted individual was born at Kinneswood, in the parish of Portmoak, in 1746. His parents—who moved in an humble sphere of life,—were distinguished for their piety and intelligence. Young Bruce was sent to the parish school at the early age of four, at which period (we are told by one of his biographers\*), he was able to read the Bible,—having been previously instructed by his father. He was a sickly-looking boy, and was obliged to be frequently absent from school, on account of the weakly state of his frame. His parents were unable, on account of their poverty, to maintain him regularly at school; and a much more healthful occupation was occasionally given him, by his being hired out, during the summer months, to herd the cattle of some neighbouring farmer. On these occasions his strength and health were recruited by the mountain breezes, which he inhaled, as he ranged along the grassy sides of the Lomonds.

Bruce's views were early directed to the ministry; and his education was conducted with a view to the sacred office. At the age of eleven, he commenced learning Latin, and being an excellent scholar, he made rapid progress in the acquisition of this language. When he reached his fifteenth year, he commenced his studies at the University of Edinburgh. During this eventful period, his father, being poor, was unable to render him much assistance, and young Bruce had considerable difficulties to struggle with, in the prosecution of his studies. "At the end of each session, he returned home much exhausted by his application to study, but speedily recruited through the attentions of the proprietor of Portmoak (Mr. David Arnot), with whom, during the recess of college, he chiefly resided, although he was seldom in perfect health, complaining generally of headaches and depression of spirits. These, however, seldom hindered his paying court to the muse. Most of his time, during the summer months, was occupied either in reading or writing poetry."

After he had finished his college curriculum, he was induced, by the solicitation of some of his friends, to take the charge of a school at Gairney Bridge, where he received, as a remuneration for his irksome labour, the moderate sum of eleven pounds annually, and was boarded in the houses of

\* The Rev. William M'Kelvie, Balgedie.

the parents whose children he taught. As it was well known that he was a favourite with the muses—though he had not yet given any of his poetical effusions to the world—a proposal was made to him, while residing in this neighbourhood, that he should publish a volume of his poems. His friends, who made the proposal, considered that the success of such a publication would furnish him with the means of adding to his scanty income. But Bruce's modesty prevented him from complying with the request of his friends. He shrunk at the idea of appearing before the world as an author.

Bruce's father was an elder of the Secession congregation of Milnathort, at that time under the pastoral superintendence of the Rev. Thomas Mair. Mr. Mair had lately been cut off from the religious communion to which he belonged (the Antiburgher Synod), on account of certain heretical opinions which he held, concerning the extent of the atonement. This circumstance, combined with an unsuccessful application, which had previously been made, to be admitted as a student in the Philosophical Class connected with the Antiburgher Theological Seminary at Alloa, induced Bruce to connect himself with the congregation of Kinross, under the pastoral care of the Rev. John Swanston. He was admitted to the study of divinity in the same connexion. The Theological Hall of the Burgher Synod was at this time under the charge of Mr. Swanston; and the young poet had the happiness of being enrolled, as a student of divinity, under the same eminent individual whose friendship he already enjoyed as his pastor.

Mr. Bruce's theological studies were of short duration. He attended the Divinity Hall only one session—that of 1766. Before he enrolled himself as a student of divinity, he was in such a poor state of health, that his pastor, Mr. Swanston, advised him to renounce altogether the idea of prosecuting his studies. When he returned home at the close of the session, he found it necessary, on account of circumstances which had occurred during his absence, to leave his situation, as teacher at Gairney Bridge, and to accept of another school at a place called Forrest Mill. While travelling to this latter place, the horse on which he rode stumbled in crossing the Devon, and Bruce was plunged into the water. Being obliged to prosecute the remainder of his journey with his clothes thoroughly wet, the symptoms of his disease (a pulmonary complaint) were greatly aggravated, and in a short while his case became hopeless. The soothing attention of friends, and medical aid, were of no avail to arrest the progress of the insidious malady that preyed upon his wasting frame. After a short residence at Forrest Mill, he returned home to the dwelling of his parents at Kinneswood, and there awaited with

calmness and Christian resignation the approach of the last enemy.

A short while before his death, he was visited by his friend and college-companion, Mr. George Lawson, who was afterwards ordained at Selkirk, and became Professor of Divinity in connexion with the Associate Synod. "Mr. Lawson found him in bed (I quote the language of the biographer already mentioned), with his countenance pale as death, while his eyes shone like lamps in a sepulchre. The poet was delighted to see him, and spoke with as much ease and freedom as if he had been in the most perfect health. Mr. Lawson remarked to him, that he was glad to see him so cheerful. 'And why,' said he, 'should not a man be cheerful on the verge of heaven?'—'But,' said Mr. L. 'you look so emaciated, I am afraid you cannot last long.'—'You remind me,' he replied, 'of the story of the Irishman, who was told that his hovel was about to fall, and I answer with him, Let it fall; it is not mine.'"

He lingered on for a few weeks, when he expired on the 5th of July, 1767, in the twenty-second year of his age. A volume of poems, which was left by this lamented individual in a state of preparation for the press, was published (in 1770) three years after his death. The person who volunteered the editorship of the poems, was Mr. John Logan, then a tutor in the family of Sir John Sinclair, but afterwards settled, as one of the ministers of the Established church, in Leith, and well known as the author of a volume of sermons which bears his name. The conduct of Logan, in reference to the productions of one whom he professed to call his friend, appears to have been anything but honourable. As the whole of Bruce's poems and letters were committed into the hand of this gentleman, with a view to the proposed publication, and as only a small portion of the poetry appeared in the volume, after it was published, Logan was charged by Bruce's relations with violating the trust reposed in him, by withholding some of the poet's productions. But the most disgraceful circumstance connected with this transaction is, that when Logan, several years afterwards, published a volume of poems professedly his own, containing in it several paraphrases, which he had given to the General Assembly for the enlargement of the psalmody of the church, at least three of these have been proved, on good evidence, to be the production of Bruce. The paraphrases referred to, as being so unceremoniously appropriated by Logan as his own, are the eighth, eleventh, and eighteenth in the Assembly's collection. Another beautiful lyric, entitled, "The Ode to the Cuckoo," was published by Logan as his own; or at least was claimed

for him by his friends, on the alleged authority of Logan himself. Satisfactory evidence has been adduced, to show that the authorship of this Ode belongs not to Logan, but to Bruce; and it has accordingly been replaced, along with the paraphrases now mentioned, in an edition of Bruce's poems lately published.\*

Bruce's productions consist of "Lochleven," a descriptive poem of considerable length; "The Last day," another poem of considerable extent, and powerfully written; several "Odes and Hymns;" with a variety of miscellaneous pieces, including "Pastorals," "Historical ballads," and "Elegies." They possess, in general, a high degree of poetical merit. The serious and the tender, the grave and the gay, are happily blended together in them. The concluding passage of "Lochleven," commencing with these words, "How blest the man! who, in these peaceful plains," &c., is one of the finest pieces of description in the English language—truthfully conceived and beautifully expressed. The "Ode to the Cuckoo" has been characterised, by no less a judge of literary merit than Edmund Burke, as "the most beautiful lyric in our language." To read the "Elegy written in Spring," without being deeply affected by it, is impossible—especially when we take into account the mournful circumstances in which it was penned by its youthful author. It possesses a melancholy charm, both in sentiment and expression, which few hearts are capable of resisting.

If fineness of conception, richness of imagery, beauty of language, and correctness of moral feeling, be the tests by which we are to estimate the merits of a poetical writer, few poets better deserve to have the laurel wreath placed upon their brow than Michael Bruce,—the Secession Bard of Lochleven.

#### REV. ANDREW MOIR, SELKIRK.

Concerning the history of this distinguished minister, I have not been able to glean almost any particulars. He was a native of the parish of Muthil, in Perthshire, and was born about the year 1731. He studied divinity under the Rev. Mr. Fisher of Glasgow, and having completed the usual course, was licensed to preach the gospel. The talents which he possessed were of a high order, and he speedily attracted notice by the superior style of his preaching. He had the peculiar

\* The reader will find an able exposure of the dishonourable conduct of Logan, in the transactions above referred to, in a well-written "Life" of Michael Bruce, published along with a new edition of his poems, by the Rev. William M'Kelvie of Balgiedie.

gift of saying striking things in an impressive manner. Having received a call from the congregation of Selkirk, he was ordained in that place on the 14th of March, 1758. The Rev. Mr. Kidston of Stow preached on the occasion.

After his ordination, the congregation prospered under him. Few ministers ever attained to a higher degree of popularity than he did. When he assisted at sacramental occasions, in neighbouring congregations, the people flocked to the tent, and listened to him with admiration. Even infidels and scoffers at religion were struck with the style of his preaching, and the manner of his address. In some of the places where he assisted, persons of avowed infidel sentiments were sometimes heard scoffingly to say—"Come, and let us go to the tent to hear Moir, for he speaks his nonsense in a graceful way."—His ministerial career was of comparatively short duration. He died in 1770, aged about 39.

The publications which he left behind him are few, and modest in their pretensions; but they show that he possessed a mind of no ordinary stamp. In some of them are to be found specimens of eloquence which few pulpit orators have been able to attain. The following are the productions of his pen:

1. The Babbler, or the Fate of the faithful ministers of Christ: A Sermon preached at Mr. Shanks' ordination at Jedburgh, Oct. 15, 1760, with the Charge, &c. The text is Acts xvii. 18. 'Some said, What will this babbler say?' Published in 1761.

2. An easy method of managing differences in judgment about religious tenets humbly pointed out. A Sermon preached at the opening of the Associate Synod, in Bristol church, near Edinburgh, Oct. 2, 1761. Text, 1 Cor. xi. 18. Published in 1763.

3. The exceeding riches of the grace of God; illustrated in two Sermons. Text, Eph. ii. 7. Published in 1765.

4. The Deist stretched upon a death-bed: or a lively portraiture of a dying infidel. Published in 1765.

5. The indictment, trial, and sentence of Messrs. T—s K—r, A—w B—n, and R—t M—n, before the Associate Synod, at the instance of the Rev. Mr. Adam Gib. By a Gentleman of the Law. Published in 1768.

#### REV. GEORGE LAWSON, D.D., SELKIRK.

The subject of this biographical notice was born in 1749, in the parish of West Linton, Peebleshire. Religious principles were early instilled into his mind by his pious parents. In boyhood he manifested that ardent desire for learning, and that passionate fondness for books, which characterized

him through the whole of his life. He showed no disposition to follow after any manual employment, and about the ordinary details of this world's business he was altogether indifferent. The whole bent of his mind was on the acquisition of knowledge.

After receiving such an education as a country school afforded, he studied literature and philosophy at the University of Edinburgh. Here he had for a fellow-student the poet Bruce, with whom he contracted a friendship which continued unimpaired till death separated them. After completing his college course, he entered upon the study of divinity in connection with the Burgher Associate Synod. His Theological studies were prosecuted first at Kinross, under the superintendence of Professor Swanston, and subsequently at Haddington, under the superintendence of Professor Brown. In 1771, he was ordained to the pastoral charge of the Associate congregation of Selkirk. Few individuals have entered into the ministry better qualified for discharging its sacred duties, than he was. Such was his knowledge of the scriptures, and so extensive and varied were his attainments in Biblical literature, that, it is said, Professor Brown marked him out, while yet a student, as his successor in the Theological Chair.

After his settlement at Selkirk, he approved himself to be 'a workman that needeth not to be ashamed.' While he was diligent, as a student, with a view to his own improvement, he was, at the same time, most conscientious in discharging the duties connected with his office, as a minister of the gospel. His capacious and vigorous mind was well-stored with the treasures of ancient and of modern literature. With the Hebrew and Greek scriptures he was quite familiar. For a number of years, he was accustomed to commit daily a portion of them to memory. So complete was his knowledge of them, that it was said, that if the scriptures had, by any accident, been destroyed, he could have restored them, in the original, from memory. Chrysostom in Greek, Massillon and Saurin in French, Owen, Jonathan Edwards, Campbell on the Gospels, Trail, Boston, and Brown, were authors which he loved to peruse. Plutarch's Lives was a favourite book with him. Homer, and the minor Greek poets, he could quote with readiness.

When the Associate Synod were called upon, in 1787, to elect a successor in the Theological Chair to Mr. Brown, the learning, talents, and piety of Mr. Lawson, pointed him out as an individual eminently qualified to occupy this important situation; and never did a Professor better justify, by his future conduct, the choice that was made. The expectations formed concerning him were fully realized. By the unaffected sim-

plicity and genuine kindness of his manner, he gained the affections of the students; while by his gravity, his wisdom, his piety, and the displays which he gave of high intellectual and moral endowments, he commanded their respect.

Mr. Lawson took a decided part in the discussions that were carried on concerning the power of the magistrate in matters of religion. When an overture was introduced into the Synod, proposing that this point should be made a matter of forbearance, he warmly supported it. He published a pamphlet, the object of which was to recommend to his brethren the adopting of the overture. The frank and manly avowal which he made of his sentiments, on this question, subjected him to no small portion of abuse, which he bore with Christian meekness. In a reply, published against him by an opponent, he was charged with having uttered falsehood. When it was stated to him by a friend, that such a charge had been made, he gave a look of astonishment, and calmly said: "I am indeed chargeable, in other respects, with many and great sins against God; but, from the earliest of my recollections, I am unable to remember any one instance in which I have asserted, as true, what I knew or believed to be false."

The Rev. Dr. William Brown, Principal of the Marischal College, Aberdeen, being made acquainted with the great learning and superior worth of Mr. Lawson, moved that the university, of which he was such a distinguished member, should confer on Mr. Lawson the honorary title of Doctor in Divinity. The ready manner in which the university acquiesced in this proposal, did honour to their liberality. When Mr. Lawson was first made aware, through the medium of a friend, of the intention of the University of Aberdeen to confer upon him this literary honour, he felt considerably nonplussed, and such was his modesty, that he permitted a considerable period to elapse before he could determine whether he would accept of it. At length he returned the following characteristic reply:—"I never aspired to literary honours. I do not feel myself worthy of them; but since the partial esteem and love of my brethren have sought this honour for me, and obtained it from the liberality of the learned men of the North, I will accept of it with gratitude and pleasure; and from the great love I have for my brethren, and the high esteem with which I regard learned men of a liberal spirit, I will do all in my power to be more deserving of their esteem and love than I have ever yet been."

Dr. Lawson, during the course of his ministry, lectured through the whole of the Sacred Volume; and such was his diligence in study, that he left behind him no fewer than eighty volumes in manuscript. Though he laboured under consider-

able bodily infirmity, during the latter years of his life, yet the powers of his mind remained as fresh and vigorous as ever. He continued to officiate every Sabbath, till within a short period of his death, though he was latterly so weak in body, that they were obliged to carry him to church in a sedan chair. Writing to a friend, when he was near the close of his ministry, he thus expressed his feelings:—"I certainly am become very feeble, but I have reason to thank God that I am free from sickness, and mostly from pain. I could walk but a small part of the way to the meeting-house without extreme fatigue, and yet I can preach for a decent length of time without much fatigue, and I believe I am as well heard as in my younger days. I am now past my seventieth year, and I cannot expect to recover the strength which I once had; but I am in the hand of a good God, who has preserved me hitherto, and sometimes delivered me from very alarming sicknesses. I complain not that I share in the common lot of the old; but I bless God that I still live when so many of my acquaintances are gone down to the grave, that I still enjoy many comforts, and that I can still perform the chiefest part of my ministerial work. I might have been happier in heaven than on earth; but, alas! I need all the time that has been given me to prepare to meet God in another world."

His last sermon was preached a fortnight before he died, from these words, (Psalm lxxxii. 6, 7.) 'I have said ye are gods, and all of you are children of the Most High: but ye shall die like men, and fall like one of the princes.' This text was chosen by him, with a view to improve the death of George the Third, who had lately paid the debt of nature.

The close of Dr. Lawson's life corresponded with the general tenor of it. He manifested in his last moments the dignity and humility of the christian. He died full of faith and hope. When he was on the threshold of glory, he said to those who were standing around him,—“It is indeed my full persuasion, and my sweet hope, that I shall never be separated from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus my Lord.” He then took each member of his family by the hand, and blessed them, and bade them farewell: after which he lifted up both his hands, and looking round him on the company that was assembled, he said, “The Lord my God bless you all.” Then uttering these words, “Lord, take me to paradise,” he placidly resigned his immortal spirit into the hand of his Saviour and his God. He died on the 21st of Feb., 1820.

Dr. Lawson's writings are mostly of a practical and expository kind. They were designed by him not for the learned, but for general usefulness. The style in which they are

written is distinguished for its plainness and simplicity, without any attempt, on the part of the author, to please his readers by employing the ornaments of rhetoric. At the same time, his composition is characterized by a considerable degree of point and energy. His productions display an extensive acquaintance with the scriptures, a profound knowledge of the workings of the human heart, and an exhaustless store of information on almost all subjects, of which he makes an admirable use for the purpose of illustrating the doctrines and enforcing the duties of the christian religion. The following are the publications which bear the name of this eminent individual :

1. Considerations on the overture lying before the Associate Synod on the power of the civil magistrate in matters of religion. Published in 1797.

2. A Sermon, entitled "The joy of parents in wise children." Text, Prov. xxiii. 24, 25. Published in 1798.

3. Discourses on the book of Esther ; with a few sermons appended. Published in 1804.

4. Lectures on the book of Ruth ; with a few discourses on the sovereignty and efficacy of grace, &c. Published in 1805.

5. Lectures on the History of Joseph. 2 vols. Published in 1807.

6. A Sermon preached before the Edin. Miss. Society at their anniversary meeting. Text, Rom xi. 3. Published in 1808.

7. Discourses on some relative duties. Published in 1809.

8. A volume containing a sermon on the death of faithful ministers ; three sermons on the agency of God in wars and revolutions ; and seven discourses to old people. Published in 1810.

9. Exposition of the book of Proverbs. 2 vols. 12mo. A posthumous work, published in 1821.

10. Discourses on the History of David ; and on the introduction of Christianity into Britain. A posthumous work, published in 1833.

#### REV. WILLIAM M'EWEN, DUNDEE.

This distinguished ornament of the Secession church was born at Perth, in 1734. His parents, who occupied a respectable situation in life, spared no expense in giving him a liberal education. He displayed in boyhood a strong attachment to learning. His bodily constitution was delicate ; but he possessed a vigorous intellect, a lively imagination, and an elegant taste. By close application to study, he acquired an intimate acquaintance with the Greek and Roman classics, as well as with the poets and historians of his own country. His mind

was, at the same time, richly imbued with scripture truth. After completing his university course, he prosecuted the study of divinity, first under the Rev. Ebenezer Erskine of Stirling, and, latterly, under the tuition of the Rev. James Fisher of Glasgow.

He was licensed to preach the gospel, by the associate presbytery of Dunfermline, in 1753; and, in the beginning of the following year, he was ordained by the same presbytery minister of the associate congregation in Dundee. As a preacher, he was much admired. His sentiments, his style, and his manner, were all calculated to produce a deep impression. His language was fervid and glowing, his reasoning powerful, and his devotion high-toned. While in his public ministrations he showed himself to be 'a workman that needeth not to be ashamed,' he rendered himself no less beloved on account of the fervour and zeal which he manifested in visiting the sick, in catechizing his congregation, and in teaching from house to house.

But it pleased the all-wise Disposer of events that his ministerial career should be of short duration. On the 29th of December, 1761, he came to Edinburgh; and on the Sabbath following he preached his last sermon in the pulpit of his friend Mr. Pattison, minister of Bristo-street congregation. The subject of his discourse was Isa. lxiii. 4, 'For the day of vengeance is in mine heart, and the year of my redeemed is come.' He was married on the Monday evening to the eldest daughter of Mr. John Wardlaw, merchant at Dalkeith. Having gone on Wednesday afternoon to Leith, on his way home to Dundee, he was taken suddenly ill that same night. It is supposed that his illness was the effect of cold and wet which he had suffered during the preceding week, when crossing the Frith of Forth. A violent fever ensued, which rendered him unfit for conversation, and which terminated fatally on the evening of Wednesday, the 13th of January, 1762. He died in the twenty-eighth year of his age, and seventh of his ministry. His death was universally lamented. The unexpected departure of such a man, in the prime of life, and in the full career of public usefulness, was mourned as a loss not only to his friends and congregation, but to the church of God. His mortal remains were committed to the dust in the churchyard of Dalkeith.

Mr. M'Ewen published, in December 1758, a sermon preached by him at the ordination of the Rev. Alexander Dick in Aberdeen. It is entitled, "The great matter and end of gospel-preaching." The text is 2 Cor. iv. 5. This discourse was much admired, and went through, in a short time, successive editions.

The other works of Mr. M'Ewen are posthumous. The first of them that was published after his death was his well-known work on the types, entitled, "Grace and truth; or, the glory and fulness of the Redeemer displayed: In an attempt to explain, illustrate, and enforce, the most remarkable types, figures, and allegories of the Old Testament." The work was published, in 1763, under the editorial care of the Rev. Mr. Pattison of Edinburgh.

In 1767, Mr. Pattison published, from the manuscripts of Mr. M'Ewen, another work, entitled, "Select Essays, doctrinal and practical, upon a variety of the most important and interesting subjects in divinity." These essays were originally composed, and delivered by their author from the pulpit, in the form of sermons. But, after being thus delivered, they were, during his leisure hours, remoulded by him, and cast into their present form.

These two works—the dissertations on the Types, and the Essays—have procured for their author a well-merited and a lasting fame. Few publications of a religious kind have been more extensively circulated, or more generally admired. They have passed through a great number of editions, and still continue to maintain their popularity. It is impossible to peruse them without being convinced that their author possessed talents of a high order. We find in them a combination of genius and piety, which it is always pleasing to contemplate. If their lamented author had been spared till he had reached a more advanced period of life, when his understanding would have been more thoroughly matured, judging from these admirable specimens of his youthful studies, we may fairly conclude that he would have attained to the highest distinction as a religious writer. The late venerable Dr. Erskine, one of the ministers of Edinburgh, in a note appended to one of his printed sermons, makes the following honourable mention of Mr. M'Ewen: "Hervey of the Church of England, and M'Ewen of the Secession, are agreeable writers; but to attempt their manner is dangerous, without an uncommonly lively imagination, solid judgment, and correct taste. Luxuriations of style, generally overlooked in original geniuses, appear ridiculous in their servile imitators."

The following tribute to the memory of this excellent minister was penned by Michael Bruce, the Bard of Lochleven:

"M'Ewen gone! and shall the mournful Muse  
A tear unto his memory refuse?  
Forbid it all ye powers that guard the just,  
Your care his actions, and his life your trust.  
The righteous perish! is M'Ewen dead?  
In him Religion, Virtue's friend, is fled.

Modest in strife, bold in religion's cause,  
He sought true honour in his God's applause.  
What manly beauties in his works appear,  
Close without straining, and concise though clear.  
Though short his life, not so his deathless fame,  
Succeeding ages shall revere his name.  
Hail, blest immortal, hail! while we are toss'd,  
Thy happy soul is landed on the coast,  
That land of bliss, where, on the peaceful shore,  
Thou view'st with pleasure, all thy dangers o'er;  
Laid in the silent grave, thy honour'd dust  
Expects the resurrection of the just."

## CHAPTER XXIV.

Secession authors—Archibald Hall—George Jerment, D.D.—John Young, D.D.—John Jamieson, D.D.—John Dick, D.D.—Henry Belfrage, D.D.—Thomas M'Crie, D.D.—Archibald Bruce—William Graham—David Williamson—James Morison of Norham—John Fraser—John Brown of Whitburn—Samuel Gilfillan—John Ballantyne—Robert Pollok, A.M.—George Paxton, D.D.—Robert Jack, D.D.—Alexander Pringle, D.D.—Miscellaneous notices—Living authors—Concluding remarks.

REV. ARCHIBALD HALL, WELL-STREET, LONDON.

MR. HALL was born at Marfield, in the parish of Pennycuick, Mid-Lothian, in 1736. He was descended of pious parents, and was early instructed by them in the principles of religion. When he was about nine years of age, he sustained a great loss in the death of his excellent mother. The exemplary patience and submission which she displayed, during a severe and protracted illness, produced a deep and salutary impression upon his mind; and the remembrance of the affectionate and serious advices, which she gave on her death-bed, continued with him through life.

His views were early directed to the holy ministry. His first teacher was Mr. John Brown, who was afterwards ordained at Haddington, and became Professor of Divinity to the Associate Synod. This eminent man taught for some time a school at Spittal, in the parish of Pennycuick; and Mr. Hall, while a youth, was instructed by him in the knowledge of the Latin, Greek, and Hebrew languages. Young Hall was an excellent scholar, and made rapid progress in learning. He afterwards attended the University of Edinburgh, where he prosecuted the study of mathematics, logic, and philosophy. Having completed his course at the University, he studied divinity under the Rev. James Fisher of Glasgow.

In 1758, he was licensed to preach the gospel, and was soon after ordained minister of the associate congregation of West-Lothian which met at Torphichen. Here he laboured with great assiduity and much acceptance for a period of about five years. He was translated from his rural charge to the British metropolis in 1765, and became minister of a congregation of Scottish Seceders, assembling in Well-street. Here a wide field of usefulness was opened up to him; and in the cultivation of it he proved himself to be "a workman that

needeth not to be ashamed." He was much beloved by his people, and attained an honourable distinction among his fellow-labourers in the Christian ministry. The period of his ministry in the metropolis was not of long duration. His constitution gave way, while he was yet in the prime of manhood. During the last years of his life, he laboured under great debility of body. Cough and difficulty of breathing afflicted him, and he frequently preached with much pain.

The exercise of his mind, during the protracted trouble which brought him to his grave, may be learned from the following extracts from letters penned by him during the progress of his decline :—"I see no refuge for me in the prospect of change and war,\* death and eternity, but only in the sovereignty of divine grace, and in the everlasting righteousness of Jesus, the surety of the better covenant. I see no other warrant, nor indeed any need of another warrant, to believe my salvation by grace, to expect victory over death, and to appropriate eternal life, besides the free and faithful exhibition which God makes to me, as a sinner, of Jesus Christ, and all things with him. O that the view of things which stands clear to my understanding may be the daily ministration of the Spirit, and of all his saving and precious fruits to my soul! In the view of these truths, I hope to say, Farewell time and all its vanities, welcome eternity and all its realities."—"The springs of life are wasting, though under many merciful circumstances, which render the decay comparatively very easy to nature. I have long believed the truth of the union between Christ and his people; I saw it was manifestly a scripture doctrine; I believed it to be a very important one; but I think the consolation of it opens of late on my mind with a kind of evidence and satisfaction which I never before perceived. By this union, Christ's righteousness is my righteousness, his death my death, his life my life, his glory my glory! Here I often solace myself. In this medium, death and the grave are divested of all their gloom; judgment appears to be a joyful solemnity; eternity, a delightful, boundless object of expectation and desire."

Such were the sentiments that animated this good man in the prospect of bidding adieu to this world. He looked forward to the approaching change with a dignified composure. When any of his people visited him, during his illness, he was peculiarly urgent in admonishing them to attend to the concerns of their soul; and assured them that all the hopes of a happy eternity, which he cherished, rested solely on the merits of that Saviour, whom he had, during the course of his

\* It was the time of the American war.

ministrations, so frequently recommended to their regard. Some of his friends having paid him a visit, when he was near the close of his days, and weeping by his bedside at the prospect of the loss which they and the church of Christ would speedily sustain in his removal from them, he addressed them in the language of the Saviour: "If ye love me, ye would not weep, but rejoice, because I say I go to the Father." Soon after this he fell asleep in Jesus. He expired on the 6th of May, 1778, in the forty-second year of his age, and the nineteenth of his ministry. His dust was deposited among the ashes of the non-conformists in Bunhill-fields.

Mr. Hall has long been favourably known to the religious world by his excellent publications. His writings bear impressed upon them the stamp of a masculine understanding, and are pervaded by a tone of practical good sense. As an author, he is distinguished for his scriptural exhibition of gospel truth, and for the clearness and energy of his style. The following are the productions of his pen,—though I am unable to state with certainty the exact order in which they issued from the press; neither am I altogether sure whether they include the whole of his publications.

1. An attempt to exhibit a Scriptural View of the Government of the Gospel church.
2. A View of Gospel worship, in 2 vols. 12mo.
3. A tract on Church-fellowship.
4. Two communion sermons; entitled *Grace and Holiness*.
5. An Impartial Survey of the religious clause in some Burgess-oaths, &c.
6. A Treatise on the Faith and Influence of the Gospel. This work was prepared by him for the press a short while before he died, and was put into the hands of his friend, Mr. Patison of Edinburgh, but was not published till a considerable time after his death.
7. A small collection of his Letters; with a short memoir prefixed, edited by one of his surviving friends some years ago.

REV. GEORGE JERMENT, D.D., OXENDEN-STREET, LONDON.

George Jerment was born at Peebles on the 9th of Oct., 1759. His father, the Rev. Richard Jerment, was for eight years minister of the associate congregation in that town, in connection with the Anti-burgher Synod; and was afterwards translated to Burntisland, where he continued to labour till the period of his death. Young Jerment was educated in the fear of God,—and was devoted by his pious parents to the service

of the Lord. He appears in early youth to have cherished the desire of proclaiming to his fellow-men the unsearchable riches of Christ.

Having completed a course of study in the languages and philosophy at the University of Edinburgh, he entered on the study of divinity, in the 17th year of his age, under Professor Moncrieff of Alloa. In the progress of his theological course, he exhibited the same ardour and perseverance, which he had previously manifested at the university. In after years, when actively engaged in the work of the ministry, he frequently spoke of this period as engraven on his memory; and with great interest alluded to many sweet and sanctified recollections of friendly intercourse, and hallowed communion with his fellow-students.

He was licensed to preach the gospel in 1780; and having preached with much acceptability to various congregations in Scotland, he was appointed by the Synod to assist the Rev. David Wilson of Bow-lane chapel, Cheapside, London. His labours in the metropolis were so acceptable to the people, that a call was speedily given him by the congregation of Bow-lane, to be colleague and successor to Mr. Wilson. He was ordained in the month of September 1782. Mr. Wilson preached on the occasion from Jeremiah I. 6, 7. and offered up the ordination prayer. Professor Bruce of Whitburn gave the charge to the young minister, and the Rev. Mr. Graham of Newcastle addressed the congregation. His colleague and he continued to labour together in the greatest harmony, till 1784, when Mr. Wilson died.

Mr. Jerment's labours in London were abundantly blessed. The congregation prospered under his ministry. In the year 1808, the congregation removed from the chapel in Bow-lane to that of Oxenden-street; where they still continue to assemble under the ministry of the Rev. Thomas Archer. During the course of the year 1816, Mr. Jerment was much enfeebled in health by an attack of palsy; and as his life was apparently in a precarious state, he acceded to the desire of his congregation, that an assistant should be obtained, to co-operate with him in his ministerial work. The Rev. William Broadfoot of Kirkwall was accordingly chosen by the people, and was inducted into the collegiate charge in 1817.

After the illness now referred to, Mr. Jerment never entirely recovered his former strength and activity. About this period he received the honorary degree of Doctor in Divinity, which title had been formerly offered to him, but had been refused. After having laboured in the christian ministry, for a period of 37 years, he finished his course on the 23d of May, 1819, in the 60th year of his age. His death was sudden, but not unex-

pected. During his last hours, his mind was calm and collected, and his faith in the gospel unshaken.

Dr. Jerment's mind was of a superior order. He possessed a refined taste, a sound judgment, and a fertile imagination. His reading was extensive and diversified; and he possessed an enlarged acquaintance with both ancient and modern literature. He was not what is called a popular preacher,—but he was what is of much higher importance, a useful one. His pulpit ministrations evidenced sincere piety, unaffected simplicity of thought and language, and careful preparation. He has left behind him memorials of his diligence in study, and of his literary attainments, in the following publications.

1. An edition of Archbishop Leighton's works (in 5 vols.) with a Memoir of the author, and a Critical Review of his writings.

2. Edited a volume of Mr. Wilson's (his colleague) discourses, and prefixed to it a short Memoir of the author.

3. Reprinted Gibbon's "Memoirs of pious Women," in 2 vols,—the second of which contained original biography from his own pen.

4. Published three series of discourses, which he delivered to his congregation; respectively entitled, "Parental duty," "Early piety," "Religion the glory of Old Men."

5. An Address, entitled "Peace to the Heathen," which was delivered at the public prayer-meeting of the London Missionary Society, so early as July 1796.

In addition to the above, he published, at various times, a few separate sermons at the request of his people. The whole of his productions breathe a spirit of devoted piety, and are eminently calculated to be useful, both in arousing the thoughtless and in encouraging the believer. By means of them, "he being dead yet speaketh."

#### REV. JOHN YOUNG, D.D., HAWICK.

This eminent minister was a native of Kinross-shire. He manifested, while a boy, a strong attachment to learning, and showed great zeal in the prosecution of it. He gave early indications of those intellectual endowments for which he afterwards became distinguished. His parents encouraged to the utmost extent of their ability his desire for learning, and gave him an excellent education. After spending several years in the study of the languages and philosophy at the university, he studied theology under Professor Moncrieff of Alloa. During the year 1766, he passed through his trials for licence with great approbation; and in the end of that year, he was licensed by the Presbytery of Sanquhar to preach the gospel.

The first associate congregation of Hawick, hearing of his character, as a talented and acceptable preacher, petitioned the presbytery of Earlstoun that they might have a trial of his gifts, by his being sent to labour among them for several Sabbaths. Their petition was granted,—and such was the effect produced, that they gave him a most harmonious call to be their minister. He was ordained amongst them on the 7th of Oct., 1767; and in every department of the christian ministry he showed himself to be “a workman that needeth not to be ashamed.” He was much beloved by his congregation. It was but newly formed a short while previous to his settlement. But under his fostering care it gradually increased, till it became one of the most numerous in the presbytery.

Immediately after the breaking out of the French Revolution, he published a political pamphlet by which he acquired considerable celebrity. The pamphlet, which is entitled *Essays on Government, Revolution, &c.* was avowedly written in defence of the tory government of that period,—and from the ability with which it is written, and the thorough-going tory principles inculcated by the author, it could not fail to be acceptable to those who then presided over the councils of the nation. This pamphlet passed in rapid succession through several editions, and excited great attention. A writer in the London Philanthropic Gazette (published in 1819) mentions, on the authority of a gentleman who was present at a dinner-party given by the Lord-chancellor of England, and where were assembled Dr. Moore, Archbishop of Canterbury, the celebrated Dr. Horsley (then Bishop of Rochester), and several other dignitaries of the Church of England, that the conversation having turned on the immense number of publications which had been produced by the French Revolution, the Lord-chancellor said, “that the best he had seen was written by a Scotch Seceder, Mr. Young in Hawick, and strongly recommended the work to the attention of the Archbishop and Bishops.” Soon after the appearance of this pamphlet, Mr. Young had the honorary title of Doctor in Divinity conferred upon him by the King’s College in Aberdeen.

So long as health permitted, Dr. Young was a regular attendant upon church courts, and took a deep interest in the proceedings of the religious association to which he belonged. But for several years prior to his death, a paralytic affection, with which he was seized, in a great measure unfitted him for the public duties of his office. Like one who knew the truth, and who felt its influence on his mind, he both hoped and quietly waited for the salvation of the Lord. At length the messenger of death arrived, and introduced him into the joy of

his Lord. He finished his course in 1806, in the thirty-ninth year of his ministry.

As an author, Dr. Young is known to the world by the following publications:—

1. Sermons on various subjects, 3 vols. oct.
2. A History of the French war, 2 vols. oct.
3. Essays on Government, Revolution, &c.

In addition to the above, there were published two or three separate sermons, preached on public occasions.

#### REV. JOHN JAMIESON, D.D., EDINBURGH.

We now present to the notice of our readers an individual who, in so far as general literature is concerned, is entitled to occupy the first place in the list of Secession authors. While living, he stood high among the learned men of the generation to which he belonged,—and, now that he is gone, he has left behind him works which, on account of the learning, the research, and the piety which they display, will transmit his name with honour to distant ages.

Dr. John Jamieson was born in Glasgow, on the 5th of March, 1759. His father, the Rev. John Jamieson, was minister of the associate congregation of Duke-street in that city. After attending the grammar-school for a few years, he commenced his studies at the college of Glasgow in the ninth year of his age. Having passed through the ordinary university course, he studied theology under Professor Moncrieff of Alloa; and, at the age of twenty, he was licensed to preach the gospel.

In August 1780, he received two calls; one from the associate (Antiburgher) congregation of Perth, and the other from the congregation (in the same connexion) of Forfar. The Synod, to which the competition was referred, decided in favour of the call from Forfar,—on the ground that there was no minister of their connexion in that town, whereas there was one in Perth. Mr. Jamieson was accordingly ordained in Forfar, with a salary of fifty pounds a-year. Here he continued to labour for a period of sixteen years, beloved by his flock, and respected by all who knew him,—on account of his intelligence, uprightness, and fidelity in discharging the duties of his office.

He was married, in August 1781, to Miss Charlotte Watson, youngest daughter of Robert Watson, Esq. of Shielhill, in the county of Angus and of Easter Rhynd in Perthshire, by whom he had seventeen children.

He possessed a strong predilection for antiquarian researches, and for the study of languages. “Even when a

boy, an old tower, or a book printed in black letter, was to his mind an object of engrossing interest." In the year 1783, he became a corresponding member of the Society of Scottish Antiquarians; and he contributed, during his residence in Angus-shire, to their *Transactions* several papers illustrative of the antiquities of that district. The college of New Jersey in America conferred upon him, in 1788, the literary honour of Doctor in Divinity; and the bestowal of the title deserves to be specially noticed, as being the *first* instance of such an honour being conferred on any minister belonging to the Secession Church.

A vacancy having occurred in the Antiburgher congregation of Edinburgh, by the death of the Rev. Adam Gib, Dr. Jamieson received, in 1793, a call from that congregation to be Mr. Gib's successor. But the people in Forfar made such a strenuous opposition to his translation, that the supreme court continued him in his present charge. The congregation in Edinburgh being disappointed in not obtaining the object of their choice, gave a call to Mr. Banks to be their pastor, who continued with them only for a short period. He demitted his charge in 1797, after which a second call was given by the congregation to Dr. Jamieson. The Synod acquiesced in his removal, and he was accordingly translated to Edinburgh, in the year now mentioned. While his translation to the Scottish metropolis opened up to him a more extensive field of usefulness in the work of the ministry than the one he had formerly occupied, it afforded him, at the same time, an opportunity of prosecuting, with greater ardour and success, his literary pursuits.

The high estimation in which Dr. Jamieson was held, by his cotemporaries, as a man of learning, may be inferred from the honours that were conferred upon him by the various societies established for the promoting of literature, not only in this country, but in other countries. Though he had long been a corresponding member of the Society of Scottish Antiquarians, he did not become an ordinary member till 1815, when he was appointed conjoint Secretary with Mr. A. Smellie, printer. He was also admitted a member of the Bannatyne Club, which was founded by Sir Walter Scott. This club is limited in the number of its members; and it is said to be nearly as difficult to procure admission into it, as it is to be elected a member of parliament. He had also the honour of becoming successively a Fellow of the Royal Society of Edinburgh, of the American Antiquarian Society, of the Society of Northern Literature of Copenhagen, and an Associate of the first class of Royal Associates of the Royal Society of Literature of London. The last-mentioned society was insti-

tuted by his Majesty, George IV., for the express purpose of encouraging literary men. So far as I am aware, Dr. Jamieson had the honour of being the only Associate in Scotland connected with this society. Along with the honour of being an Associate, he enjoyed the more substantial benefit of receiving from the Sovereign one hundred pounds a-year.

When the union between the two Secession Synods (Burgher and Antiburgher) was accomplished, on the 8th of September, 1820, Dr. Jamieson had the special honour conferred upon him of being elected Moderator of the Synod to which he belonged, that he might act as their representative in the proceedings that took place on that eventful occasion. As Senior Moderator, he gave the right hand of fellowship to his brother, Mr. Balmer of Berwick, who was Moderator of the Burgher Synod. In the various preparatory steps that led to this event, Dr. Jamieson took an active part; and when the event was consummated, it filled him with the liveliest joy.

After labouring in the vineyard for about half a century, he resigned his charge of Nicholson-street congregation, in 1830, chiefly on account of the increasing infirmities of age. His past life had been one of severe labour, and he needed, at his advanced period of life, some relaxation. He did not, however, spend his time in idleness. He occasionally performed ministerial service, when an opportunity presented itself, and at least a portion of his time was devoted to his accustomed literary avocations. In 1837, he sustained a severe shock, in the death of Mrs. Jamieson, to whom he had been long united. He had, previously to this, followed to the grave fourteen of his children, several of whom had reached the period of manhood.—Among the number was Robert Jamieson, one of the first lawyers of the day, to whose memory the Faculty of Advocates has erected a monument, in the New West church burying-ground at Edinburgh.

Dr. Jamieson was for some time aware of his approaching end, and looked forward to the change with perfect tranquillity. He had committed the concerns of his soul into the hands of his Redeemer, and he knew that with him all was safe. He died at his house in Charlotte-street, Edinburgh, on the 12th of July, 1838, in the 80th year of his age, having been invested with the ministerial character during the long period of 57 years.

I shall now notice his literary productions, and from the number, variety, and extent of them, my readers will perceive to what a severe ordeal his constitution must have been subjected by the herculean labours which he performed; and they will readily award to him the praise of being a person of no ordinary research, and of extensive literary acquirements.

1. His first publication was "Sermons on the Heart," in two vols. octavo. Published in 1789. In this work the author discovers an intimate knowledge of the human heart, and shows how admirably the descriptions given in Scripture of the deceitfulness and depravity of the heart accord with the reality.

2. The same year (1789), he published a poem entitled "The Sorrows of Slavery." This work was designed by its author as a contribution to the cause of humanity: and whatever opinion may be formed of the merits of the poem, no doubt can be entertained of the benevolent intention of its author in the publication of it.

3. Next in order of time, was published, "Socinianism unmasked;"—occasioned by Dr. M'Gill's practical Essay on the death of Christ. The exact date of the publication I am unable to ascertain.

4. An ordination Sermon.

5. A Dialogue between a Socinian divine and the Devil, on the confines of the other world. A small octavo.

6. An Alarm to Great Britain; or an inquiry into the rapid progress of infidelity in the present age. It was published in 1795, and was occasioned by the French Revolution. It has a special reference to our neighbours at that period, and the influence of their opinions on ourselves.

7. A Vindication of the doctrines of Scripture, and the Primitive Faith concerning the divinity of Christ, in reply to Priestley's History of Early Opinions. 2 vols. octavo. Published in 1795. This is an able and a learned work. The Rev. George Johnston, (Dr. Jamieson's successor in Nicholson-street congregation,) in a communication addressed to the writer of these pages, says,—“The Doctor told me that when composing his ‘Vindication,’ he fancied Priestley sitting on the other side of the table; and that every paragraph he wrote, on finishing it, he turned to his opponent, and asked him, what he had to say in reply to it.”

8. Soon after his answer to Priestley, he published "Cougal and Fenella, a Tale." 8vo.

9. Eternity; a poem addressed to Freethinkers and Philosophical Christians. 8vo. 1798.

10. Remarks on Rowland Hill's Journal. 8vo. 1799.

11. The Use of Sacred History: with two dissertations prefixed,—the one on the authenticity of the history contained in the Pentateuch and the book of Joshua,—and the other proving that the books ascribed to Moses were actually written by him, and that he wrote them by divine inspiration. 2 vols. 8vo. 1802.

12. Important Trial in the court of Conscience. 8vo. 1806.

13. In 1809–10, appeared his great work, entitled, “An Etymological Dictionary of the Scottish language,”—to which is prefixed a dissertation on the origin of the Scottish language. 2 vols. 4to. Two supplemental volumes were published in 1825. The author also left a mass of manuscript sufficient to form two additional volumes. This he bequeathed to the Advocates’ Library, with permission to publish it if they should see proper. The fame of Dr. Jamieson, as an author rests chiefly on this gigantic work. For patient research and extensive learning, it stands almost without a rival. The labour, which it cost the author in collecting and arranging such a mass of materials, in a department of literature hitherto unexplored, must have been immense. It has been justly remarked concerning this work, “that it is sufficient to give fame to a whole university.” An abridgment of the Dictionary was published in 1814.

14. In 1811, was published the “Beneficent Woman,”—a Sermon.

15. In 1814 appeared “Hermes Scythicus, or the radical affinities of the Greek and Latin languages to the Gothic, illustrated from the Moeso-Gothic, Anglo-Saxon, French, Alemanic, Suio-Gothic, Islandic, &c. To which is prefixed a dissertation on the historical proofs of the Scythian origin of the Greeks.” 8vo. This is a work concerning the merits of which very few are capable of judging. The very title of it is sufficient to frighten any ordinary reader from the perusal of it.

16. A Dissertation, from the Doctor’s pen, “On the origin of Cremation, or the burning of the dead,” appeared in the Transactions of the Edinburgh Society for 1817,—vol. viii.

17. The Hopes of an Empire reversed; or, the Night of Pleasure turned into Fear. A Sermon on the death of the Princess Charlotte. Published in 1818.

18. Three Sermons, in 1819, on the duty, excellency, and pleasantness of brotherly unity: Preached with a view to recommend the proposed union between the Burgher and Anti burgher Synods.

19. The History of the ancient Culdees of Iona, and of their settlement in Scotland, England, and Ireland, made its appearance, in one quarto volume, in 1821.

20. Next in order was “Sletzon’s Theatrum Scotiæ, with Illustrations.” A folio.

21. This was followed, in 1828, by “Views of the Royal Palaces of Scotland, with historical and topographical remarks.” In royal quarto.

22. In the 36th number of Bibliotheca Topographica Britannica, is an article from the Doctor’s pen, containing

“Remarks on the progress of the Roman army in Scotland, during the sixth campaign of Agricola, and an account of the Roman camps of *Battle-dykes* and *Haerfauds*, with the *Via Militaris* extending between them in the county of Forfar.”

23. To the above must be added, “The Water Kelpie, or the Spirit of the Waters,” in the third volume of *Scott’s Minstrelsy of the Border*: also the glossary of Scottish words at the end.

24. An article, in the *Westminster Review*, upon the Origin of the Scottish nation.

#### REV. JOHN DICK, D.D., GLASGOW.

This eminent divine and accomplished scholar was born at Aberdeen on the 10th of October 1764. His father, the Rev. Alexander Dick, was minister of the associate (Burgher) congregation in that town. John Dick gave early indication of a fondness for learning, and of superior mental endowments. While a boy, attending the grammar-school of Aberdeen, he carried off from his youthful compeers several prizes. When he had completed his twelfth year, he became a student in King’s College, Aberdeen. At this period, he competed for one of the bursaries in that college; and though some of those who competed along with him “were his superiors in age and stature,” he was declared to be the successful candidate. Dr. Charles Burney and Sir James Macintosh—persons, who, like himself, afterwards acquired literary fame,—were amongst the number of his associates at college.

In 1780, he entered the Divinity Hall, then under the superintendence of the Rev. John Brown of Haddington: and having completed the usual term of study, he was licensed to preach the gospel, in 1785, at the early age of twenty-one. As a preacher, he attracted notice by the elegance of his composition, and by the correctness and propriety of his delivery. Soon after being licensed, he received calls from the congregations of Scone, Musselburgh, and Slateford. The competition was decided by the Associate Synod in favour of the call from Slateford, and Mr. Dick was ordained at this place on the 26th of October, 1786.

In this rural retirement, he formed those habits of close application to study, which continued with him during life. He stored his mind with the treasures both of ancient and of modern literature. While he studied hard, with a view to his own personal improvement, he was, at the same time, most assiduous in his endeavours to promote the spiritual interests of his flock. In his preparation for the pulpit, and in the minis-

terial visitation and examination of his people he was most conscientious. So exact were all his arrangements, and so well did he husband his time, that besides attending to the private and public duties of his ministry, he found leisure to write for the press.

After labouring for fifteen years in the village of Slateford, he was called upon to occupy a more extensive field of usefulness by his removal to Glasgow. He was inducted on the 21st of May, 1801, as colleague and successor to Mr. Alexander Pirie, minister of Shuttle-street (now Greyfriars) congregation in that town. He had, before his removal from Slateford, been twice called by the congregation in Aberdeen, to be his father's successor, but had declined, on both occasions, accepting of the call.

He was much admired in Glasgow, as a preacher, by all who were capable of appreciating intellectual excellence. The urbanity of his manner, and the kindness of his disposition, endeared him to his congregation; while, on account of his extensive learning, his distinguished talents, and his exemplary deportment as a minister of the gospel, he was held in high estimation by the community at large. In 1816, the literary honour of Doctor in Divinity was conferred upon him by the college of Princeton, New Jersey, America; and the theological chair of the Associate Synod having become vacant by the death of Dr. Lawson of Selkirk, in 1819, Dr. Dick was elected successor in the professorship to that eminent individual, in April, the following year.

When the movement on the subject of voluntary churches commenced in Scotland in the year 1832, an association was formed in Glasgow for the purpose of diffusing the principles, and giving support to the cause, of voluntary churches. Of this association Dr. Dick was elected President, and this situation he continued to occupy till his death.

On Wednesday, the 23d January, 1833, a public meeting was held in Glasgow to consider the propriety and expediency of petitioning the legislature for some enactment concerning the better observance of the Sabbath. This meeting was attended by ministers and people of all religious denominations. The Lord Provost presided on the occasion. Dr. Dick had one of the resolutions intrusted to him, and spoke in support of it. This was his last appearance in public.

On the evening of the same day, after returning home from a meeting of the session, he complained of ear-ache; but as this was a complaint to which he was subject, it created no alarm. He was restless during the night, rose at a late hour next morning, and on Thursday afternoon was seized with shivering, when he was obliged to retire to bed.

Medical aid was procured, and recourse was had to bleeding, which afforded him a temporary relief. But he soon after sunk into a stupor, from which he never recovered. He expired on the following afternoon (the 25th January) at 4 o'clock, in the sixty-ninth year of his age, and the forty-seventh of his ministry. The suddenness of his death cast a gloom over the community. As he had lived revered and beloved by all who knew him, so he died lamented by the good of all denominations.

As an author, he ranks in the first class. The celebrity which he has acquired by his writings is not more merited than it is extensive. The productions he has left behind him are finished specimens of composition. They are all characterized by accuracy of conception, beauty of expression, appropriateness of illustration, clearness of arrangement; and discover, on the part of the author, a profound knowledge of the scriptures, and an intimate acquaintance with the various departments of literature. Some of his works bid fair to be, not only of extensive, but of lasting usefulness to the church. By means of them, the name of Dr. Dick will be transmitted with honour to posterity, as a learned, elegant, classical, and pious writer.

I shall now mention the productions of his pen, in the order in which they were published.

1. His first appearance, as an author, was in 1788, when he published a sermon entitled "The Conduct and Doom of false teachers." The text is 2 Pet. ii. 1. The publication of this discourse was occasioned by the heretical Essay which Dr. M'Gill of Ayr published on the death of Christ, in which Socinian sentiments were openly maintained. In the sermon, the author reprobates the conduct of those who corrupt the truth; and especially, who disseminate error while they hold office in a church whose creed is orthodox.

2. He next published, "Confessions of faith shown to be necessary, and the duty of churches with respect to them explained;" a Sermon preached at the opening of the Associate Synod, in April 1796, from 2 Tim. i. 23, 'Hold fast the form of sound words.' The effect which this sermon produced, and the obloquy which it procured for its author from a small minority who left the Synod, have already been noticed in the account given of the Old and New Light controversy in the preceding history.

3. He published, in 1800, "An Essay on the Inspiration of the Scriptures:" an admirable work, clear, argumentative, and convincing. It has become deservedly a standard work in theology.

4. Next appeared a Sermon on the qualifications and the

call of missionaries; preached before the Edinburgh Missionary Society in 1801. The text is Acts xiii. 2.

5. Lectures on the Acts of the Apostles—in two vols. 8vo.—were published in 1808. These lectures were delivered to crowded and admiring audiences on the second Sabbath evening of each month. They are first-rate models of expository discourses.

6. A volume of Sermons on miscellaneous subjects appeared in 1816. This volume was published at the request of his friends; and it fully maintained the credit which he had previously acquired as an author.

7. Lectures on Theology, in 4 vols. oct., appeared in 1834, with an interesting Memoir of the author prefixed by one of his sons. This is a posthumous work, consisting of the lectures which were delivered by Dr. Dick to the students attending the Divinity-Hall, during the period of his professorship. It is stated in the Preface, that “they were not prepared by him for the press, nor is it known that he had any intention that they should ever be published. They are printed from his MSS. nearly *verbatim*.” It is a work of great excellence, and has added much to the well-earned reputation of its departed author. For clear and scriptural views of the doctrines of the gospel, for extensive research, for nice discrimination between truth and error,—and for elegance and propriety of language,—it will stand a comparison with any system of theology extant in the English language.

REV. HENRY BELFRAGE, D.D., FALKIRK.

Henry Belfrage was born at Falkirk on the 24th of March, 1774. He was the fourth son of the Rev. John Belfrage, minister of the associate (Burgher) congregation in that town. When young he showed an uncommon sweetness of disposition and an ardent desire after knowledge. In the early period of life, books were his constant delight, and they continued to be the chief sources of his enjoyment after he reached the period of manhood. He was dedicated in his infancy, by his parents, to the service of God, and from his boyhood he looked forward to the christian ministry as the delightful employment of his riper years. After receiving such an education as the parish school of Falkirk afforded, he entered the University of Edinburgh in the thirteenth year of his age. He showed great ardour and perseverance in the prosecution of his studies. His summer vacations were spent under the roof of his venerable father, to whose counsels and instructions he was much indebted for the progress he made in literature as well as in piety. He commenced the study of divinity, in autumn 1789, under the able tuition of Professor Lawson of Selkirk.

He still, however, continued during the winter months attending the college classes, and by the time he had completed his course, his mind was richly stored with a variety of useful knowledge. He appeared before the presbytery of Stirling and Falkirk, on the 16th of May, 1793, and had the usual probationary trials prescribed to him, which having completed to the satisfaction of the presbytery, he received licence to preach the gospel on the 1st of July, the same year.

As a preacher, he was highly and deservedly popular. His personal appearance, the tones of his voice, the dignity of his manner, the beauty of his language, the richness of his imagery, and above all, the unction of his sentiments, combined to attract toward him a more than ordinary share of public attention. He had not long been licensed, when he received calls from the congregations of Falkirk, Saltcoats, and Lochwinnoch. The competition was decided by the Associate Synod in favour of the call from the congregation of Falkirk; and Mr. Belfrage was ordained as colleague and successor to his father, in that congregation, on the 18th of June, 1794. The relation thus formed, in such auspicious circumstances, was to all the parties concerned a happy one. Mr. Belfrage, advertg to it in one of his publications, makes the following reflections concerning it:—"The Apostle Paul beautifully says of Timothy, 'As a son with a father, he served with me in the gospel,' words expressing their harmonious and affectionate co-operation in the work of the Lord, and they were fully realized in this conjunction in the ministry, where affection in the one case was mingled with entire confidence, and in the other with the highest respect. What a blessing was such a situation to one ordained to the ministry at twenty years of age! Its advantages and its pleasures must be objects of his grateful remembrance to his dying day."

The congregation of Falkirk was scattered over an extensive district of country, and it required no small physical strength, as well as a considerable portion of mental energy, to perform the ordinary routine of ministerial duty amongst them, in visiting and catechizing. But Mr. Belfrage "plied his holy vocation amongst them with an assiduity, a prudence, and a kindness, which have rarely been equalled, and never surpassed. The sick and the poor received a large share of his attention. Often did he direct his steps to the chamber of the afflicted and the dying. The young were the objects of his affectionate solicitude; and the aged found in him a kind-hearted comforter and friend. He made a point of preparing regularly for the pulpit; and the time which he was able to spare from his numerous avocations was faithfully employed by him in the improvement of his own mind."

Mr. Belfrage commenced publishing, in 1814, a series of devotional and practical works, which followed each other in rapid succession till near the close of his life. By means of these works he not only acquired celebrity as a religious writer, but greatly extended the sphere of his usefulness. He penned volume after volume with a despatch of which there are few instances to be found amongst the ministers of any church. The fertility of his pen, especially in later years, was altogether astonishing. Nor did he permit any of his publications to pass through his hands in a slovenly manner; for he seldom, if ever, sent any one of them to the press, without having written it three times over.

He did not neglect the duties of his ministry to acquire fame as an author. He exhibited a bright example of fidelity and diligence in attending to all the duties of the sacred office. The number of persons under his charge, as a minister, probably amounted to 2,000, of whom upwards of 900 were in full communion. He held diets of examination once a-year in the various districts of his congregation; and once a-year he visited ministerially all the families under his charge, teaching from house to house. Two, and sometimes three, days every week, during eight months in the year, were devoted by him to these laborious employments. "He frequently left home at eight in the morning, and did not return till four in the afternoon; and he had occasionally extra meetings in the evening, from six till eight o'clock, in the session-house, with such of the work-people as he did not find at home during the day. From November till the end of March, he was employed in examining and visiting in the town and villages; and from June till the end of August, he was engaged in the country districts."

In 1824, the University of St. Andrews conferred upon him, in a manner highly creditable to all the parties concerned, the degree of Doctor in Divinity. Never was this honour more merited than in the case of Dr. Belfrage. It was received by him with grateful feelings; and it tended to stimulate him to increased diligence in his useful and benevolent labours.

Dr. Belfrage's constitution, which was naturally robust, began to give way, while he was yet in the noon-day of his usefulness. The incessant toil to which he subjected himself, in performing his ministerial duties, and in preparing his publications for the press, proved too much even for his frame. Symptoms of disease began to make their appearance in the spring of 1834. They were mastered for a season, but returned with increased severity in the beginning of 1835. He lingered on till the autumn of that year, when, after having laboured faithfully in his Master's service for a period of forty-

one years, he breathed his last on the 14th of September. His latter end was peace.

As an author, Dr. Belfrage is entitled to hold a distinguished place among the religious writers of the generation to which he belonged. As a devotional and a practical writer, he has few equals. Every page of his works breathes devotion. His illustration of doctrinal topics is rendered peculiarly pleasing by the richness of his style, and by the variety of imagery which he employs. He discovers an intimate acquaintance with the workings of the human heart, and while he displays much ingenuity in detecting and unfolding the various forms in which the wickedness of the heart manifests itself, he is unrivalled in applying to the wounded spirit the balm of consolation. There is no class of persons who will not derive instruction and pleasure from the perusal of his writings.

The following are the works which Dr. Belfrage gave to the world, in the order in which they issued from the press:

1. *Sacramental Addresses and Meditations*. 1st vol. published in 1814.

2. *Practical Discourses*, intended to promote the Happiness and Improvement of the Young. 1817.

3. *A Practical Catechism*, intended to exhibit the leading facts and principles of Christianity, in connexion with their moral influence; to which is added an Address to Children, and some prayers to guide the devotions of the Young. 1818.

4. *Sacramental Addresses and Meditations*; with a few Sermons interspersed. 2d vol. published in 1821.

5. *A Funeral Sermon*, entitled "The Feelings Excited by Departed Worth:" preached to Queen Anne-street congregation, Dunfermline, at the death of the Rev. Dr. Husband. The text is 2 Kings ii. 12. Published in 1821.

6. *Sketches of Life and Character*, from Scripture and from Observation. 1822.

7. *Monitor to Families*, or Discourses on some of the Duties and Scenes of domestic life. 1823.

8. *A Guide to the Lord's Table*, in the Catechetical form. To which is added an Address to applicants for admission, and some meditations to aid their devotions. 1823.

9. *A Sermon* preached before the London Missionary Society, on the 11th of May, 1825. The text is Isaiah ix. 6.

10. *Discourses on the Duties and Consolations of the Aged*. Published in 1827.

11. *Counsels for the Sanctuary and for Civil life*. 1829.

12. *Memoirs of the Rev. Dr. Waugh*, of Well-street, London. This is a joint production of Dr. Belfrage and of his

friend the Rev. James Hay, D.D. of Kinross. The first edition made its appearance in 1830.

13. A Portrait of John the Baptist; or an Illustration of his History and Doctrine. 1830.

14. Practical Exposition of the Assembly's Shorter Catechism. The first edition was published in 1832, in one volume. A second edition, considerably enlarged, was published in 1834, in two volumes. This is a work on which the author bestowed considerable pains. It is replete with sound views of Scripture truth, expressed in a pleasing form.

15. Select Essays on various topics, Religious and Moral. 1832.

16. A Biographical account of the Rev. Dr. Lawson; prefixed to a volume of the Doctor's discourses, "On the History of David," &c. Published in 1833.

17. In addition to the above, there were found among his manuscripts, at the period of his death, two volumes of Lectures, in a state of complete readiness for the press, which it was his intention to publish, but increasing debility prevented him from carrying his intention into effect. There were also two small volumes, which he had prepared at the request of one of his publishers; the one being a series of discourses on the parable of the Ten Virgins, and having for its title, "The Visible Church in the Last Days," the other consisting of discourses on the promises, and entitled, "Christian Instruction in Hope, in Warning, and in Example."

#### REV. THOMAS M'CRIE, D.D., EDINBURGH.

There are few individuals to whose honourable exertions the cause of religion and of literature is more indebted, than the one whose name is prefixed to this article. In giving an account of the authors who, by their talents and learning, have adorned the Secession church, while they have contributed to the improvement of their fellow-men, I perform nothing more than an act of justice, when I assign to Dr. M'Crie a place in the very first rank.

This distinguished minister was born at Dunse, in Berwickshire, in November, 1772. His father, Thomas M'Crie, was a manufacturer and merchant in that town. Young M'Crie, from his earliest years, was much attached to his books, and was eager in the acquisition of knowledge. After receiving the elements of a classical education at the parish school of Dunse, he was enrolled as a student in the University of Edinburgh in December, 1788. From a biographical account of him, lately published by one of his sons,\*—we

\* Rev. Thomas M'Crie, Edinburgh.

learn that his father discouraged him in the prosecution of his studies, declaring, "that he would not make a gentleman of one of his sons, at the expense of the rest;" and it was through the interference of his maternal grandfather, and of other relations, that he was encouraged to proceed. He endeavoured to help himself by having recourse, like many other students, to teaching. He acted for a short period as usher in the parish school of Kelso, and afterward, in the same capacity, in East Linton. He taught also a school at Brechin during the course of his studies. In September, 1791, he entered the Divinity Hall in connexion with the Antiburgher Synod, which was then under the superintendence of Professor Bruce of Whitburn; and on the 9th of September, 1795, he was licensed by the Presbytery of Kelso to preach the gospel.

Little more than a month elapsed, after he was licensed, when he received a unanimous call from the congregation of Potterrow, Edinburgh. At this period he entertained doubts concerning the doctrine taught in the Confession of Faith regarding the power of the magistrate in matters of religion. His scruples on this subject were so strong, that he had not freedom to give an unlimited answer to the second question in the formula, and would not submit to ordination, unless the Moderator of the presbytery was allowed, when proposing the questions of the formula to him, to intimate that Mr. M'Crie was not to be understood as giving his sentiments on that point. The presbytery being a subordinate court, did not think themselves at liberty to make any alteration in the public profession of the religious society to which they belonged, and they referred the matter for decision to the supreme court. In May, 1796, the General Associate Synod made the following declaration, for the purpose of giving relief to the conscience of Mr. M'Crie, and of such other licentiates as might entertain similar scruples: "The Synod declare, that as the Confession of Faith was at first received by the Church of Scotland with some exception as to the power of the civil magistrate relative to spiritual matters, so the Synod, for the satisfaction of all who desire to know their mind on this subject, extend that exception to every thing in that Confession which, taken by itself, seems to allow the punishment of good and peaceable subjects on account of their religious opinions and observances; that they approve of no other way of bringing men into the church, or retaining them in it, than such as are spiritual, and were used by the apostles and other ministers of the Word in the first ages of the christian church; persuasion, not force; the power of the gospel, not the sword of the civil magistrate." By this declaration Mr. M'Crie's scruples were in the meantime removed; and

he was ordained to the office of the ministry on the 26th of May, 1796.

He was much beloved by his congregation, and laboured amongst them with great fidelity and success. His pulpit ministrations were much relished by the intelligent and pious; and he soon made his name be known beyond the circle of his own religious community, by his useful and talented publications. The year after he was ordained, he published a sermon at the request of his congregation, which had been preached to them on the occasion of making a collection for the promoting of a mission to Kentucky. The title of it is, "The duty of Christian Societies toward each other, in relation to the measures for propagating the gospel, which at present engage the attention of the religious world." He published about the same time, in concert with Mr. Whytock of Dalkeith, a first and second "Dialogue between John, a Baptist, and Ebenezer, a Seceder." The object of this publication was to correct some mistaken views on the subject of faith, which had been promulgated in a work published by Mr. M'Lean, Baptist minister in Edinburgh.

Mr. M'Crie entered keenly into the controversy, which was carried on for several years in the General Associate Synod, respecting the power of the civil magistrate in matters of religion. His views on this point had undergone a change from what they were, when he received licence and ordination. The particulars of this controversy, and the part which Mr. M'Crie took in it, have been fully detailed in the preceding history, and it is unnecessary here further to advert to them.

In connection with this subject, Mr. M'Crie published a bulky and somewhat heavy pamphlet, entitled, "Statement of the Difference between the Profession of the Reformed Church of Scotland, as adopted by Seceders, and the Profession contained in the New Testament and other Acts, lately adopted by the General Associate Synod, &c."

Mr. M'Crie became extensively and honourably known to the literary world, by the publication of his *Life of John Knox*, in 1811. This work was most favourably received by the public. The *Edinburgh Review* and some of the leading journals of the day noticed it in terms of high commendation. The University of Edinburgh marked the sense, which they entertained of the merits of its author, by conferring upon him, in February, 1813, the academic honour of Doctor in Divinity. A second and enlarged edition of the work appeared, in two volumes, in the year now mentioned.

A *Review of Tales of my Landlord*, which appeared in the *Edinburgh Christian Instructor*, for January 1817, and which was continued in the two succeeding numbers, attracted

considerable notice, and added to the well-earned reputation of Dr. M'Crie. In these articles the Doctor vindicated, with great spirit and effect, the Scottish covenanters against the attacks that had been made upon them by Sir Walter Scott in his *Tale of Old Mortality*.

Soon after this he took part in a discussion which was carried on, through the medium of the press, concerning the conduct of the Rev. Dr. Thomson of St. George's, Edinburgh, who refused to obey the proclamation requiring the churches to be opened for divine service on the funeral day of the Princess Charlotte. Dr. Thomson's conduct was loudly condemned in newspapers and pamphlets. His friend Dr. M'Crie took up the pen in his defence. Under the signature of "Scoto-Britannus" he published a pamphlet, entitled, "Free thoughts on the late religious celebration of the funeral of her Royal Highness, the Princess Charlotte of Wales; and on the discussion to which it gave rise in Edinburgh."

During the years 1817 and 1818 he had to perform, in addition to his other labours, the duties of Theological Professor to the religious society with which he was connected. The Synod were urgent that he should accept permanently the office, but he refused to do so. He afterwards resumed the labours of it, in 1834, when he agreed to assist Professor Paxton. The lectures which he delivered were chiefly connected with biblical criticism.

In 1819, Dr. M'Crie published his *Life of Andrew Melville*,—a work of great research, and of deep interest. This work, in point of literary merit, at least sustained the well-earned reputation which its author had previously acquired. Some of the literary journals assailed it with great virulence, but it was ably defended by others. The biographer of Dr. M'Crie, already referred to, when stating the fact that this production of the Doctor's pen was not noticed either in the *Edinburgh* or *Quarterly Review*, says: "The reason which was currently reported at the time to have been assigned for this omission by the accomplished editor of the *Edinburgh Review* was, that it would require some years reading to qualify himself for reviewing such a work."

When the union took place, in 1820, between the two great bodies of the Secession, the mind of Dr. M'Crie was filled with dark forebodings on the subject. The good man could see nothing but evil as likely to result from this auspicious event. In a letter addressed to one of his correspondents (dated April 11, 1821), he states his views of it in the following terms: "I need not insist on the important circumstance of the views of the majority of the Synod being supported by the prevailing tone of public sentiment, and the undeniable

fact that sentiments far more liberal and remote from former principles, are entertained by most at least on the Burgher side of the Union; and that there is every reason to look for a gradual development of these, instead of a return to the original ground. I see, therefore, no prospect of any efficient stand being made for the public cause, unless by a firm and compact, though perhaps small, body of those who are cordially attached to that cause being collected and combined. To this all the real friends of the covenanted cause should bend their endeavours. If this is not done, all seems to be over in our day. When all is examined, it will be found that the question simply comes to this,—Latitudinarianism, as hitherto condemned by Seceders, or the Covenanted Reformation, as hitherto avouched by them,—whether is the former or the latter of God?"\*

In 1821—soon after the union was accomplished—he published "Two Discourses on the unity of the Church, her divisions and their removal." His object in the publication of these discourses was "to point out the fallacious and unscriptural character of modern plans of union, particularly that adopted by the United Secession." Along with them he published an Appendix, containing "A Short View of the plan of religious reformation and union adopted originally by the Secession." He appears to have had considerable misgivings in his own mind about the propriety of publishing these discourses, and also great doubts as to their success: "Before engaging in the late small publication," he says in a letter dated February 19, 1821,† "I was not insensible to the delicacy of the task, nor can I well tell how the repugnance felt to the undertaking was overcome. When the work was going on, I had no time for reflection on consequences. But no sooner was it published, than I began to accuse myself of rashness and presumption, in attempting such a work without the consent and advice of my brethren, and in a manner taking it out of their hands. To this succeeded what was as tormenting, a full conviction that I had wronged and injured their cause." And again, "The Two Discourses I do not expect to be popular. The literate world would never think of looking at them, the good folk of the auld kirk would throw them away in disgust, and others, whom I need not name, with indignation. There is a rumour that they are to be answered. I hope the Lord will preserve me from controversy."

He edited, in 1825, "Memoirs of Mr. William Veitch and George Brysson, written by themselves;" to which he prefixed short biographical notices, and added illustrative notes.

\* Life of Thomas M'Crie, D.D., by his Son, p. 255.

† Ibid., p. 262.

Two years after the editing of these "Memoirs," a work in which he had been for some time engaged made its appearance,—the "History of the Progress and Suppression of the Reformation in Italy." It was published in May 1827, and was succeeded, in 1829, by his history of "The Progress and Suppression of the Reformation in Spain, in the sixteenth century." Concerning this last publication the author says: "It is a sequel to that which I lately published on the Reformation in Italy, and completes what I intended as a contribution to that memorable revolution in the sixteenth century, which, in a greater or less degree, affected all the nations of Europe."

The Life of the great Reformer, Calvin, now occupied his attention. He had collected materials for this work, and had begun to put them into shape, when death arrested the progress of his pen. He did not live to complete what he had commenced. On the 4th of August, 1835, he was suddenly attacked by disease, which assumed all the symptoms of apoplexy. The physician who was sent for pronounced his case hopeless. He lingered on till the following day, when he expired, in the sixty-third year of his age, and the fortieth of his ministry. On the 12th of August his mortal remains were committed to the dust, in Greyfriars churchyard. The funeral was a public one. The Commission of the General Assembly, which met on that day, appointed a deputation of their number to attend. The preachers and students belonging to the halls of the Establishment and the United Secession, requested leave to be present; and the funeral procession, amounting to nearly 1,500 persons, included in it the magistrates of the city, and clergymen of all denominations.

In addition to the works of Dr. M'Crie, which have already been noticed, the following productions of his pen have been published since his death: A volume of "Sermons," "Lectures on the Book of Esther," and "Miscellaneous writings, chiefly historical." This last volume contains in it articles previously published in religious periodicals, with "a variety of other valuable pieces, now collected for the first time in an authentic form."

The writings of Dr. M'Crie have procured for him an honourable distinction among the literary men of the age in which he lived. Whether we take into the account his piety, his talents, or his learning, he must be regarded as one of the brightest ornaments of the Secession church. His is, indeed, a name of which any church would have reason to be proud.

## REV. ARCHIBALD BRUCE, WHITBURN

The subject of this biographical notice was born at Broomhall, near Denny, Stirlingshire, in 1746. The circumstances of his parents were such as enabled them to give him a liberal education. He gave early indication of decided piety and of uncommon talents. Even from boyhood his views were directed to the office of the holy ministry. Having received the elements of a classical education at a country school, he prosecuted the study of the languages and philosophy at the university of Glasgow. He studied divinity under Professor Moncrieff of Alloa. In August, 1768, he was ordained minister of the associate (Antiburgher) congregation of Whitburn. After the death of Mr. Moncrieff of Alloa, in 1786, his talents and learning pointed him out as a fit person to occupy the theological chair. He was accordingly elected Professor of Divinity, by the General Associate Synod. This situation he continued to occupy till the year 1806, when a separation between him and the Synod took place. The particulars connected with the controversy, which led to the separation, have been fully detailed in the preceding history, and I shall not here again advert to them.

After Mr. Bruce's separation from the General Associate Synod, he continued to superintend the theological class connected with the Constitutional Presbytery. "He possessed talents of a superior order, which he had cultivated with unwearied industry. To an imagination which was lively and fertile, he united a sound and correct judgment. His reading, which was various and extensive, was conducted with such method, and so digested, that he could at any time command the use of it; and during a life devoted to study he had amassed a stock of knowledge, on all the branches of learning connected with his profession, extremely rare." "He was more qualified for writing than public speaking; but though his utterance was slow, and he had no claims to the attractions of delivery, yet his discourses from the pulpit always commanded the attention of the judicious and serious, by the profound views and striking illustrations of divine truth which they contained, and by the vein of solid piety which ran through them. His piety, his erudition, his uncommon modesty and gentlemanly manners, gained him the esteem of all his acquaintance; and these qualities, added to the warm interest which he took in their literary and spiritual improvement, made him revered and beloved by his students."\*

\* Account of Professor Bruce, by Dr. Mc'Crie, in the *Scots Magazine* for April, 1816.

The general state of Mr. Bruce's health was remarkably good, for a person of his studious habits. "About the beginning of the year 1816, he was seized with occasional fainting-fits, which alarmed his friends, and were considered by himself as tokens of approaching dissolution. On the day on which he died (Feb. 28th, 1816), which was the Lord's day, he had performed as usual, though somewhat indisposed, the exercises of the pulpit. After returning home, and while conversing with a member of his congregation, he almost instantaneously expired without a struggle or a groan." He was in the seventieth year of his age when he died, and had served God in the gospel of his Son for a period of nearly forty-eight years.

The publications of Professor Bruce show him to have been a person of extensive and of varied erudition. He was profoundly versed in ecclesiastical history, and had an intimate acquaintance with ancient and modern literature. He possessed a solid judgment, and a lively imagination; and the ample stores of his well-cultivated mind he could bring to bear on any particular subject that occupied his pen. On account of the number and variety of his publications, he is entitled to hold a high place in the list of Secession authors.

The following notice of his works, and of the occasions on which they were published, will be perused with interest.

1. In 1774, he published "The Kirkiad, or Golden Age of the Church of Scotland. Canto I." The poem is anonymous, and is a satire on the reign of moderation. The writer tells us, that he intended afterwards to take the pen, and to exhibit in some future cantos a large picture of our celebrated golden age, and to rescue some other glorious names from oblivion. But graver subjects seem by and by to have occupied his attention, and to have prevented him from carrying his design into effect.

2. In 1780, he published "Free Thoughts on the Toleration of Popery." This work made its appearance when the British Senate were beginning to consider the propriety of repealing certain penal statutes against the Roman Catholics, and when the public mind was greatly excited about the question. The work has been frequently quoted by "The Protestant," as evincing much talent and research. It was published under the assumed name of Calvinus Minor, Scoto-Britannus.

3. In 1785, he published True Patriotism, or a Public Spirit for God and Religion recommended, and the want of it reprehended; a Sermon preached before the General Associate Synod, on a day appointed for humiliation. The text is Judges v. 23. "Curse ye Meroz," &c.

4. In 1788, being the centenary of the Revolution, he pub-

lished a large octavo volume, entitled, "Annus Secularis, or the British Jubilee, a review of an act of Assembly, appointing the 5th of November, 1788, an anniversary thanksgiving in commemoration of the Revolution." In this work, the author enters at great length into the origin, progress, and tendency of religious festivals, both in ancient and modern times. But the practical advantage likely to result from it will be considered by many as by no means commensurate with the labour bestowed on the execution of it. The work was published under the assumed name of Calvinus Presbyter.

5. In 1791, a small anonymous treatise appeared, of which Mr. Bruce was the author, having for its title, "The Catechism Modernized; and adapted to the meridian of patronage, and late improvements in the Church of Scotland, with suitable Creeds and Prayers." This is a cutting satire on the chief promoters of patronage; and is in the shape of a parody on the Assembly's Shorter Catechism—each question in the Catechism having its corresponding question in the treatise. In the opinion of many, the author has carried the parody too far; and this seems to have been his own opinion, as he never took notice of this treatise in any advertisement of his publications.

6. In 1794, he published "Reflexions on the Freedom of Writing, and Impropriety of attempting to suppress it by penal laws." This work was occasioned by a proclamation issued against seditious publications; and professes to be written by a North British Protestant. It accords in spirit and character with its motto.

"What Britons dare to think, he dares to tell."

7. In 1797, he published a clever anonymous poem, entitled, "A Penitential Epistle and Humble Supplication to his Holiness the Pope, in the name of the people of Great Britain, for a perfect reconciliation and perpetual alliance with Rome." In this poem, the author seems quite at home in exposing and ridiculing the superstitions of the Romish church.

8. In 1797, he published "Introductory and Occasional Lectures to Students," vol. I. These Lectures were read in the Theological Hall at Whitburn. The second volume was in the press, and nearly ready for publication, at the time of Mr. Bruce's death. It was completed and edited by Dr. M'Crie.

9. In 1797, he translated, from the French, Pictet's Discourses on True and False Religion, with a vindication of the religion and reformation of Protestants. To this work he prefixed an account of the Life and Writings of the author.

10. In 1797, there appeared a small pamphlet, of which

Mr. Bruce was the author, entitled, "Principal Differences between the religious principles of those called the Antigovernment Party, and of other Presbyterians, especially those of the Secession in Scotland, on the head of Magistracy."

11. In 1798, he edited, from a manuscript in the theological library at Whitburn, "Memoirs of the Public Life of Mr. James Hog of Carnock, and of the Ecclesiastical Proceedings of his times." This interesting pamphlet contains notices of some of the leading events in several meetings of Assembly immediately after the Revolution.

12. In 1798, he published a "Historico-Politico-Ecclesiastical Dissertation on the supremacy of civil powers in matters of religion."

13. In 1808, he published an octavo volume, extending to 400 pages, entitled, "A Review of the Proceedings of the General Associate Synod, and of some Presbyteries, in reference to the ministers who protested against the imposition of a New Testament."

14. In 1812, he collected, and published, in a small volume, the poems which, in the course of several years, he had sent to the periodicals of the day. This volume he entitled, "Poems serious and amusing, by a Rev. Divine."

15. In 1813, he published a critical account of the Life of Mr. Alexander Morus, a celebrated preacher and Professor of Theology in Geneva and Holland. Appended to this work, there are Select Sermons of Morus, translated from the French by Mr. Bruce.

16. In 1816, the year in which Mr. Bruce died, he was engaged in publishing a volume of Sermons on Practical Subjects.

Besides the publications thus noticed, Mr. Bruce wrote several pamphlets on questions that were keenly agitated in his day. These it is unnecessary to specify, as they were for the most part anonymous, and their interest limited to a particular period.

In a note appended to the Life of Dr. M'Crie, by his son, (p. 55.) the writer says, "It may be mentioned as a curious illustration of the zeal with which Mr. Bruce prosecuted his literary labours, that he brought a printer to Whitburn, and employed him exclusively for many years in printing his own publications."

#### REV. WILLIAM GRAHAM, NEWCASTLE.

Mr. Graham was born in the parish of Carriden, West Lothian, on the 16th of March, 1737, of pious and respectable parents. By his father, who was steward to the Earl of

Hopetoun, he was sent at an early age to the grammar-school at Borrowstonness. On completing his course of education at school, he was placed with a writer to the signet in Edinburgh, where he remained three years. But disliking the profession of the law, and impelled by a loftier ambition, he consecrated himself to the christian ministry. With this view he commenced the study of theology, under the Rev. Alexander Moncrieff, at Abernethy. Such was the high estimation in which Mr. Graham was held, as a scholar, that he was appointed, at the early age of eighteen, to take charge of the Philosophical Class, which had been instituted in connexion with the Theological Seminary of the Secession Church.

In 1758, Mr. Graham was licensed to preach the gospel; and in the following year he was ordained to the pastoral charge of the associate (Antiburgher) congregation of Whitehaven. Soon after his ordination, he married Mary, the third daughter of George Johnston, Esq. of Whiteknow in Dumfries-shire. In 1770, he removed to Newcastle-upon-Tyne, where he was settled as the successor of the Rev. Alexander Nimmo, who had died in the beginning of that year. In this part of the vineyard he continued to labour for thirty years, distinguished by his ardent love of study, and his devotion to the duties of the pastoral office. In October, 1800, he was affected by a stroke of paralysis, to which his constitution, originally robust, had been predisposed by his unceasing mental exertions, in the prosecution of his studies. Under this complaint he lingered for three months in a state of great debility; and on the 19th of January, 1801, he entered into the joy of his Lord.

Mr. Graham was highly gifted. His mental powers, distinguished by their masculine vigour, were adorned and improved by a liberal education. He was well-versed in the languages, ancient and modern. He had studied the law, though his taste had led him to follow after other pursuits. He was also acquainted with the leading departments of science, in some of which he had made considerable proficiency. Mathematics occupied, for some years, a considerable share of his attention. He cherished the hope of discovering an exact method for finding the longitude at sea. The machinery for this purpose was constructed, under his direction, by Mr. Coventry, an ingenious watchmaker in Newcastle; but the experiment did not prove successful.

He printed several sermons preached on different occasions. One of these was the first sermon preached for the London Missionary Society in Newcastle, on the 24th of April, 1796. In the same year, he printed "An Essay tending to remove certain scruples respecting the constitution and direction of



Missionary Societies." A quarto edition of the Bible was published in Newcastle, with notes and reflections from his pen.

But the work, by which he is best known, and to which he is chiefly indebted for his fame as an author, is his "Review of the Ecclesiastical Establishments of Europe." This work, when first published, did not excite general attention; but from the beginning it was read, and in proportion as it became known, it was studied. Its progress was silent and gradual. It showed itself to be a powerful leaven, diffusing its influence among increasing multitudes. The strangeness of its statements and the boldness of its positions promoted inquiry, while the force of its arguments produced conviction. It thus lent a most efficient aid in preparing the public mind for the formal consideration and free discussion of that great question to which it refers.

The following notice of this work, from Bogue and Bennett's History of English Dissenters, published in 1812, will be interesting to many of my readers: "While many had been pointing out the faults of the Church of England, and of the Church of Scotland, it was not until the year 1792, that one writer, in an elaborate treatise, exposed the evils of all national establishments of religion. Such an exposure was not indeed in all respects entirely new; for many had glanced at the fallacy of the principle on which these monopolies are founded, and had hinted at the evil consequences which they produced. But the Rev. William Graham, a minister of the Secession Church in Newcastle, has the honour of making the grand systematic attack in his 'Review of the Ecclesiastical Establishments of Europe.' With much comprehension of view he surveys the extensive subject, with deep reflection he forms his estimate of the good or evil consequences of an alliance between church and state, and with unhesitating conviction he announces the conclusion that this long established connection is contrary to the dictates of the Scriptures, opposed to the genius of christianity, fatal to the interests of religion, and dangerous to the civil state. The book failing at first to excite the attention it deserved, provoked no immediate controversy; but as its merit was gradually discerned, its influence was proved by an increased opposition to all exclusive establishments in religion, while the clergy of the state were roused to defend their monopoly, and thus a tone was given to the controversy which continues to this day. The periodical publication entitled 'The Christian Observer' may be pronounced the most able antagonist of Mr. Graham's system, which is still capable of a more complete elucidation; and the attack as well as the defence of national

churches is yet likely to call forth greater numbers and powers than have hitherto engaged in the contest."

REV. DAVID WILLIAMSON, WHITEHAVEN.

David Williamson was born at Strathmiglo, in Fife, on the 12th of Sept., 1763. His father was a respectable farmer, who had no other offspring but his son David; and, as the father's ambition was to see the young man become a minister of the Secession church, he was determined to give him a liberal education. For this purpose young Williamson was placed under the tuition of his uncle (by the father's side), who was himself a minister. Afterwards he was sent to the University of Edinburgh; and, having completed his college course, he studied divinity under Professor Moncrieff of Alloa. Having passed through the usual probationary trials before the presbytery, he was licensed to preach the gospel. About a month after receiving licence, he was called by the congregations of Whitehaven and Montrose. When the competition came before the Synod, they appointed him, contrary to his own wishes, to be ordained at Whitehaven. His ordination took place on the 19th of September, 1787.

He laboured for a considerable number of years in this place. But, in consequence of a misunderstanding which unhappily took place between him and the trustees of the congregation, he left Whitehaven; and, on the 13th of June, 1820, took his departure from Liverpool for America, accompanied by his wife and two daughters. He reached his destination on the 31st of the following month. On his voyage outward he caught a severe cold, which settled on his lungs, and in a few months terminated his existence. His funeral took place on the 15th of May, 1821, and his remains were interred in a vault belonging to one of the principal families in New York.

Mr. Williamson published, in 1792, *Lectures on civil and religious liberty*, which have been pronounced by competent judges to be highly creditable to their author. He published also, in 1815, "*The whole Duty of Man*,"—a sermon preached by him before the Friendly Societies in Whitehaven, at one of their anniversaries.

REV. JAMES MORISON, NORHAM.

This venerable minister was born at Turfhill, near Kinross, on the 27th of September, 1732. His parents occupied a highly respectable station in life, and espoused the cause of the Secession at the very commencement of it. Mr. Morison

enjoyed, in early life, all the benefit which religious training and a holy example, on the part of his parents, could impart. He did not commence the study of the languages till he was fifteen years of age, when he entered the grammar-school. After having attended the school for a period of little more than three years, he was found qualified, on examination, to be admitted to the study of philosophy in the class that was connected with the Theological Seminary at Abernethy. This class he attended for two years, when, being subjected to another examination as to the progress he had made in his philosophical studies, he was enrolled on the 2d of June, 1752, as a student of divinity under the superintendence of the Rev. Alexander Moncrieff of Culfargie. He attended the prelections of this eminent Professor for three sessions, when he was taken on trials for licence by the presbytery of Earlstoun; and, having completed them to the satisfaction of the presbytery, he was licensed to preach the gospel on the 13th of January, 1756.

Only a few months elapsed after receiving licence, when he was called by the congregation of Norham; and, on the 23d of June, 1756, he was ordained to the office of the ministry amongst them. At the period of his ordination, the congregation did not consist of more than thirty members in full communion with the Secession church; nor was there any great prospect of their number being speedily increased. The great bulk of the inhabitants were attached to the Episcopalian religion; and they were at that period unpolished in their manners, and ignorant of divine things.

But Mr. Morison, by his prudent conduct and unremitting diligence in discharging the duties of his ministry, soon effected a decided change to the better. A visible improvement took place, both in the religious sentiments and outward deportment of the people among whom he resided. The rising race in a particular manner occupied his attention. He commenced a Sabbath evening school, for communicating religious instruction to the young, nearly half-a-century before schools of this description became general. This proved an excellent nursery for his congregation; and, with a view to the improvement of the children who were thus training up under his ministry, he published a religious catechism for their use, which he entitled "The New Year's Gift."

Mr. Morison was a close student. He was no less conscientious in his preparations for the pulpit, than he was exemplary in the visitation and examination of his flock. The sermons which he preached to his people were written out in a distinct hand, nearly as fully as they were delivered. He left behind him numerous manuscripts as a memorial of his unremitting diligence in study.

After he had laboured in the ministry for more than half-a-century, and when his powers of utterance began to fail—so that he was not distinctly heard by the congregation—measures were adopted to provide him a colleague. Mr. Thomas Young was ordained, in this capacity, on the 7th of April, 1812. Mr. Morison himself presided on this solemn occasion; and, after the ordination of Mr. Young, he continued to take part of the public services on the Sabbath, until his voice completely failed him, when he was obliged altogether to desist. His mental powers retained their energy till within four years of his death, when they became gradually impaired. These years were spent by him in retirement, but not in idleness. He spent much of his time in reading the Bible and in prayer, and frequently expressed the hope which he had, through the merits of Christ, of an eternity of happiness beyond the grave. He was, by the kindness of God, permitted to enjoy some measure of health till within nine weeks of his death, when he was struck with palsy. He did not long survive the shock. He expired on the 14th of February, 1824, in the ninety-second year of his age, and the sixty-eighth of his ministry.

The following circumstance deserves to be noticed, as a proof of the high respect in which Mr. Morison was held by persons of all denominations, and as affording a display of liberality highly creditable to the individuals concerned. Mr. Morison, on retiring from the active duties of his office, agreed to accept of a certain annuity, as the funds of the congregation were not sufficient to pay him the full amount of his stipend, and, at the same time, provide a stipend for his colleague. In order, however, that he might enjoy the means of adequate support in his old age, a representation was made in his favour to the Bishop of Durham, and to some gentlemen residing in the neighbourhood of Norham; and, through their active benevolence, a fund was formed, from which he received a handsome allowance during the remainder of his days.

Mr. Morison's publications are neither numerous nor bulky. In 1778, he published "The Crisis: a discourse of the aspects of Providence in 1777." He published in 1789, a work on the duty of covenanting, entitled, "Present duty, in Treatises relative to the duty of covenant renovation." Two other publications, entitled, "The Contrast," and "A Plea against Popery," issued from his pen. The dates of these I am unable to give. At his death there were found amongst his manuscripts six sermons which he intended to publish. They were fully written out for the press, and entitled, "The Revolution, or the Kingdoms of this world becoming the kingdoms of Christ." The text is, Rev. xi. 15, "And the seventh angel sounded, and there were great voices in heaven, saying,

The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ."

REV. JOHN FRASER, A.M., AUCHTERMUCHTY.

Mr. Fraser was born on the 3d of June (O.S.), 1745, at Bunchrew, a small village in the neighbourhood of Inverness. His parents were pious persons connected with the Established Church, and gave to their son a religious education. He became the subject of serious impressions in his youth, and he felt, at an early period, a strong desire to be a preacher of the gospel. He was sent to the grammar-school of Inverness, where he was instructed in the knowledge of the classics. In November, 1760, he entered the King's College, Aberdeen, and during three successive sessions he prosecuted the study of the languages and philosophy. Other three sessions were spent by him in studying theology in the same university.

During the period of his studies at Aberdeen, he was not satisfied with the kind of doctrine which he heard taught in the pulpits of the national church, and which he heard also delivered by his fellow-students in the Divinity Hall. On the other hand, he much relished the discourses which he heard, while occasionally attending the ministrations of Mr. Alexander Dick, minister of the associate (Burgher) congregation in that town. This led him to inquire into the history and causes of the Secession, and ultimately to become a Seceder. His parents and other relatives were decidedly opposed to his leaving the national church. They argued and remonstrated with him on the impropriety of taking such a step. An only brother, to whom he had been much indebted in the prosecution of his studies, wrote to him in the following terms:—"My dear brother, if you pay any regard to the good wishes of others, but more especially to the entreaties of your affectionate brother, you will not leave your mother-church, in a time when she has most need of gospel preachers. Therefore may the Lord admonish and direct you to what will be most for his glory, and your own everlasting happiness. I wish you may be strengthened and fortified to withstand the insinuations of the Seceders." Mr. Fraser had the firmness to resist the importunities of his friends, and to pursue what to him appeared to be the path of duty, regardless of the consequences.

In the spring of 1767, he entered the Divinity Hall, in connexion with the Burgher Synod, which was then under the superintendence of the Rev. John Swanston of Kinross. In October, the same year, after having gone through the

usual probationary trials, he was licensed by the Presbytery of Perth and Dunfermline to preach the gospel. A unanimous call was given him by the congregation of Auchtermuchty, within little more than a month after he was licensed; and on the 7th of July, 1768, he was ordained minister of that congregation. Here he continued to labour during the remainder of his life.

He was a person of retiring habits and of close application to study. During the early part of his ministry, he devoted much of his time to the perusal of such masters in theology as Calvin, Turretine, and Maestricht. Owen, Witsius, Boston, and Hervey were always favourite authors with him; and in the latter years of his life, he paid much attention to the works of President Edwards. His classical attainments were of a superior order. He was familiarly acquainted with the best Latin authors. The study of the scriptures in the original languages constituted a part of his daily employment. For mathematics and philosophy he had a natural fondness. Above all, he was eminently a man of prayer. It was a remark made concerning him by one of his cotemporaries—the Rev. Michael Gilfillan of Dunblane—that he “never knew a man so much given to prayer.”

The name of Mr. Fraser is associated, in the history of the Secession, with the commencement of the Old and New Light controversy in the Associate Synod. He presented to the Synod, at their meeting in May, 1795, a Representation and Petition, relating to the power of the civil magistrate in matters of religion, and the obligation of the national covenants, and craving that the Synod would make these points matters of forbearance. The keen discussions to which the presenting of this petition gave rise, and the final results in which these discussions issued, have been fully detailed in the main body of the narrative; and to it I refer my readers.

After Mr. Fraser had laboured for a period of forty-six years in Auchtermuchty, his bodily infirmities increased so much, that he came to the resolution of resigning his charge of the congregation. The pastoral relation between him and his people was formally dissolved by the presbytery of Perth, at a meeting held on the 20th of April, 1814; and, on the first Sabbath of May, he preached a farewell sermon to his congregation from Acts xx. 32, “And now, brethren, I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace.” In reference to the step which he had now taken, we find him expressing, in a communication to his friends, the following truly christian sentiments: “As for man’s honour and secular interest, they are not to be laid in the balance with the spiritual good of a christian congregation. Let God be glorified, come of me

what will; and though I decrease, may the great Redeemer increase. I hope that the same goodness and mercy which have hitherto followed me, will follow me to the end.”—  
“This affair has not at all sunk my spirits. May it be to my mercy to have all things working together for my good, and to be enabled duly to consider the works of the Lord, and to regard the operation of his hand. Soon I must give an account of my stewardship. But while I am spared, I wish to do as much good for Christ as I can.”

This worthy minister continued to reside among his people after the demission of his charge, and endeavoured to promote their spiritual improvement, by visiting the sick, by administering private instruction, and by occasionally preaching on Sabbath, when his services were required. He beguiled his leisure hours by writing essays on religious topics, which were published in the *Evangelical Magazine* and the *Christian Repository*. In such useful exercises as these did he spend the evening of his days, “rejoicing in the salvation of God, delighting in his service, and acquiescing in his sovereign will.” In the winter of 1818 he became seriously indisposed, and he contemplated with a cheerful mind the approach of the last enemy. “All my consolation and joy (said he) in the prospect of eternity flow from those precious truths and promises which I was wont to preach from the pulpit, and to recommend in private to the sick for their consolation in the time of trouble.” On the 18th of December, in the year now mentioned, he entered into the joy of his Lord, after having served him faithfully in the gospel for a period of fifty years.

Mr. Fraser never published any thing during his lifetime, with the exception of a few essays in some of the religious periodicals. But he left behind him a number of sermons, transcribed with his own hand from his short-hand manuscripts with a view to publication. A volume of discourses selected from those which he had thus transcribed, with a few essays annexed, was published after his death. To this volume a memoir of the author, prepared by one of his sons (the Rev. Dr. Fraser of Kennoway), was prefixed. These discourses are full of the marrow of the gospel. The style of them is plain and simple, the sentiments are highly evangelical, and they are pervaded, from beginning to end, by a tone of unaffected piety.

#### REV. JOHN BROWN, WHITBURN.

Mr. Brown was born at Haddington, on the 24th of July, 1754. He was the eldest son of the Rev. John Brown, minister of the associate (Burgher) congregation in that

town, and Professor of Divinity to the Associate Synod. His mother was Janet Thomson, daughter of Mr. John Thomson, merchant in Musselburgh. From his youth he gave decided indications of piety. His brother Ebenezer (late minister of Inverkeithing) says in a letter concerning him: "Often while I was sporting with boys on the street, he was engaged in religious conversation and in prayer with them. He manifested too, a tender regard for truth. Both my father and I would have sometimes smiled, when, on mentioning a fact, he would have said, 'Such was the case, at least I think so.'"

He was sent to the university of Edinburgh when he was about fourteen years of age. He entered on the study of divinity, under the superintendence of his father, about the year 1772. He was licensed to preach the gospel by the associate presbytery of Edinburgh, on the 21st of May, 1776. Soon after receiving licence, he was called by the congregation of Whitburn, and was ordained amongst them on the 22d of May, 1777. As a preacher, he was characterized by the simplicity and seriousness of his manner, and by the highly evangelical tone of his sentiments. During a long course of ministerial usefulness, he maintained a high degree of popularity. His preaching was peculiarly *savoury* to the pious. In the early part of his ministry, "such numbers attended the neighbouring communions at which he assisted, that sometimes he had to preach to them in the open air, even in winter, amid the snow, the ordinary place of worship not being sufficient to contain them."

After his settlement at Whitburn, Mr. Brown pursued the peaceful tenor of his way, doing good to all as he had opportunity. He took a deep interest in the various religious institutions of the day, and exerted himself to promote their success. In the spring of 1814, he paid a visit to London, to attend the annual religious meetings. He was much gratified with his visit to the metropolis. Writing to his friends at home, he says: "I am well, and much entertained here. This is a wonderful place, and a wonderful time, but of all I have seen there is nothing like the Bible Society." During his temporary sojourn in London, he was frequently employed in preaching.

Every thing connected with the spiritual improvement of the Highlanders was to him an object of deep concern. Having heard of a religious movement among the Highlanders in one of the districts of Perthshire—which excited a good deal of interest at the time—he made an excursion, during the summer of 1818, to the Highlands, that he might see with his own eyes what God had wrought for the inhabitants of that remote region. In his journey, he embraced every opportunity of

preaching the gospel; and, after his return home, he published an account of what he had witnessed: "With much satisfaction (he says) have I spent ten or twelve days in the Perthshire Highlands. Considering my advanced years, and the labours of a numerous congregation, I need scarcely think of ever seeing again my good friends the Highlanders, in their houses and glens; but were I in the vigour of youth, I would count it a duty and a pleasure to pay them a visit for a month every year, and preach among these Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ. May the wilderness and the solitary places soon be glad, and the desert rejoice and blossom as the rose."

When Mr. Brown's strength began to decline, and when he became in a great measure unfit for the active duties of his ministry, his affectionate people adopted measures to procure a colleague for him. They gave a call to Mr. William Millar, who was ordained on the 15th of November, 1831, as his colleague and successor. After the ordination, Mr. Brown preached only eight Sabbaths. His strength had been visibly failing during the two or three last years of his life, but the messenger of death at last approached him in the form of a severe paralytic attack. During his last illness, his mind was soothed and supported by those delightful truths which he had often published to his fellow-men. When he appeared to be asleep, he was overheard saying to himself, "I'll flee to the blood of Jesus, the precious blood of Jesus. I have always done so, and all the devils in hell shall not prevent me from doing it now." He was also heard saying, "He is my God, He is my Creator, He is my Redeemer." After lingering for a few weeks on the confines of the grave, he fell asleep in Jesus on the 10th of Feb., 1832, in the seventy-eighth year of his age, and the fifty-fifth of his ministry.

Mr. Brown, while living, was favourably known to the religious world as the author of a variety of useful publications. His sentiments are in a high degree scriptural, and a tone of unaffected piety pervades the whole of his productions. It was not literary fame that he sought, in appearing from time to time as an author, but the advancement of the cause of truth and the glory of his divine Master. Mr. Brown gave to the world the following publications; some of them are original productions, others of them were merely edited by him.

1. *The Evangelical Preacher: A select collection of doctrinal and practical Sermons, chiefly of English divines of the eighteenth century.* 3 vols. 12mo. 1802—1806.

2. *Memoirs of the Life and Character of the late Rev. James Hervey, A.M.* 1806. This work has gone through three editions.

3. *A collection of Religious Letters from books and MSS.* 12mo. 1813.

4. A collection of Letters from printed books and MSS. suited to children and youth. 18mo. 1815.

5. Gospel Truth accurately stated and illustrated by the Rev. Messrs. Hog, Boston, Erskines, and others, occasioned by the republication of the Marrow of Modern Divinity. 12mo. 1817. A new and greatly enlarged edition of this work was published at Glasgow in 1831.

6. A brief account of a tour in the Highlands of Perthshire. 12mo. 1813.

7. Memoirs of Private Christians.

8. Christian Experience; or the spiritual exercise of Eminent Christians in different ages and places, stated in their own words. 18mo. 1825.

9. Descriptive list of religious books in the English language fit for general use. 12mo. 1827.

10. Evangelical Beauties of the late Rev. Hugh Binning, with an account of his life. 32mo. 1828.

11. Evangelical Beauties of Archbishop Leighton. 12mo. 1829.

12. Notes devotional and explanatory on the Translations and Paraphrases generally used in the Presbyterian congregations in Scotland. Published with an edition of the Psalms with his father's Notes, in Glasgow.

13. Memoir of the Rev. Thomas Bradbury. 18mo. 1831.

14. Memorials of the Non-conformist Ministers of the seventeenth century, with an introductory Essay, by William M'Gavin, Esq. Glasgow. It is worthy of remark, that this was the last literary work of both the excellent men whose names appear on its title-page. Mr. Brown died just before it went to press, and Mr. M'Gavin just as it was leaving it.

15. After the death of Mr. Brown, were published Letters on Sanctification,—some of which had previously appeared in the Christian Repository and Monitor, with a Memoir of his Life by his son-in-law, the Rev. David Smith of Biggar.

#### REV. SAMUEL GILFILLAN, COMBIE.

The subject of this memoir was born on the 24th of November, 1762, at the village of Buchlyvie in Stirlingshire. He was the youngest of fifteen children. His parents, who moved in a respectable sphere of life, were distinguished for their intelligence and piety. He displayed, at an early period, a passionate fondness for books. "When a boy, he occasionally resided with his sister, whose husband occupied a farm in the vicinity of his native village. On these occasions he was sometimes employed to do any little office for which he was competent. But such was his love of reading, that the services

of a companion were, as frequently as he could, obtained for some trifling sum, that he might indulge this ruling passion undisturbed."

After receiving the elements of a classical education at a country school, he entered the university of Glasgow in November, 1782. He commenced the study of theology under Professor Moncrieff of Alloa, in September, 1784. After attending the Divinity Hall at Alloa, for two or three sessions, Professor Moncrieff died, and Mr. Gilfillan completed his theological studies at Whitburn, under the superintendence of Professor Bruce. He received licence from the presbytery of Perth, in June, 1789. So acceptable were his labours as a preacher, that within little more than a year after he was licensed, he received calls from no fewer than three congregations. The congregations that competed for his services were, Barry in Angus-shire, and Auchtergaven and Comrie in Perthshire. The competition was decided by the supreme court in favour of Comrie, and he was ordained at that place on the 12th of April, 1791. At his ordination the congregation did not consist of more than sixty-five members, and the greater part of them were in humble circumstances of life. His labours amongst them were greatly blessed. In visiting, in catechising, and in performing all the duties of the ministerial office, he was most exemplary. He devoted much of his time to reading and to study. The Hebrew, Greek, Latin, French, Dutch, and Gaelic languages, all in their turn occupied his attention. The Greek Testament was so familiar to him, from his frequent perusal of it, that he could quote almost any verse, in the original, that was proposed to him.

Mr. Gilfillan's ministerial labours extended over a wide tract of country, for he was accustomed frequently to itinerate in the border districts of the Highlands, and during the course of his ministry, he laboured to promote in a variety of ways the spiritual welfare of his Celtic countrymen. He was much beloved by his people, and was much attached to them in return. On one occasion, having been proposed as a candidate for another charge, he said, "I love my people, and will never leave them till I am forced." A proposal was made to him, by the presbytery of Perth, of which he was a member, that he should go as a missionary to America; but he declined complying with the proposal. His refusal was not owing to any want of missionary zeal, for few ministers took a deeper interest in the success of missions than he did. It is believed that his attachment to his people, and the conviction that he already occupied a scene of missionary labour, influenced him in remaining where he was.

His labours in the ministry were brought unexpectedly to

a close. A sudden attack of disease laid him on the bed of affliction. The nature of his disorder—inflammation in the bowels—bade defiance to the skill of the physician. His naturally robust frame speedily gave way beneath the violence of the attack. After an illness of three days' continuance, he expired on the 15th day of October, 1826, in the 64th year of his age, and the 36th of his ministry.

Mr. Gilfillan published, during the course of his ministry, a number of works which have been much relished by the intelligent and pious, and have proved extensively useful. His style of writing is plain and simple, without any pretensions to ornament. There is occasionally a good deal of energy and point in his mode of expression. He has at command a variety of appropriate illustration, though it is sometimes sufficiently homely. His writings discover an intimate acquaintance with the workings of the human heart, and show that their author possessed a rich store of theological knowledge. They are peculiarly adapted for usefulness in the domestic circle. The following are the productions of his pen :

1. He published, in 1804, an *Essay on the Sanctification of the Sabbath*. This work has passed through eleven editions (including one in Gaelic) in this country, and two in America.

2. In 1819, he published a work, entitled, "*Domestic Piety*." A new and enlarged edition of this work, including a discourse on the Necessity and Importance of Early Piety, appeared in 1825.

3. He published, about the same period, *Short Discourses for the use of Families*. This work "consists partly of original matter, and partly of discourses and essays which had appeared in the *Christian Magazine*."

4. In 1825, he published two *Essays on Hypocrisy and Meditation*, and a small tract, entitled, "*A Manual of Baptism*." The same year, he commenced writing a *Treatise on Relative Duties*. Part of this work was transcribed for the press, but never published.

5. "*Discourses on the Dignity, Grace, and Operations of the Holy Spirit, with additional Sermons on the Fruits of the Spirit, and other Subjects*," appeared in 1826. As this was the last, so it is regarded by many as the best of his publications. This work, he states in the preface, had its origin in the following circumstance:—"He had been visiting a brother minister who was on his death-bed. The conversation partly turned on the influences of the Spirit. The latter, after expressing his regret that that divine Agent was so much neglected by ministers and people, earnestly entreated him, and obtained his promise, to write on the honour due to the Holy

Ghost. This request was made in March, 1823. In the following May, he began to preach a course of sermons on the subject to his congregation, which occupied the greater part of two years." After the lapse of a short period, these discourses were given to the public in the form in which they now appear.

6. A volume was published after his death, containing a number of his "Letters," and a "Memoir of his Life," by his son, the Rev. James Gilfillan of Stirling.

#### REV. JOHN BALLANTYNE, STONEHAVEN.

John Ballantyne was born at South Piteddie, in the parish of Kinghorn, on the 8th of May, 1778. He received his early education at a school in the village of Lochgelly, which was taught successively, while he attended it, by the late Mr. Andrew Lothian, minister of the Secession congregation, Portsburgh, Edinburgh, and by Mr. David Inglis, the present minister of the Secession congregation of Port-Glasgow. He became a student in the university of Edinburgh, in 1795. His parents were members of the Established Church. Mr. Ballantyne, however, became a member of the Burgher branch of the Secession, and attended the Divinity Hall under the superintendence of Professor Lawson of Selkirk. During the prosecution of his studies, he was engaged in teaching a school, first at Lochgelly, where he received his own elementary education, and afterwards in Edinburgh.

When Mr. Ballantyne became a preacher, he attracted the notice of the congregations, and speedily received a call from two of them. In one of these—Stonehaven in Kincardineshire—he was ordained in 1805. His congregation was small, and while he was exemplary in the performance of the important duties connected with the pastoral office, he had at the same time ample leisure for attending to his own personal improvement. His mind was vigorous, acute, and active. He had an insatiable thirst for knowledge, and an ardent love of truth. He was of opinion that every minister of the gospel should, with a view to his own improvement, have some one favourite subject, to his proficiency in which his reading and thinking, apart from his professional studies (though certainly not unconnected with them) should be subservient. Whatever may be thought of the value of this opinion, as a general rule, it was indicative of the mental character of the individual who entertained it; and at all events he acted on it himself. His own choice of a subject was early made. Metaphysical science was one congenial to him. It was further recommended to him by its affinity to his professional

study of theology ; and he continued with singular ardour and perseverance to prosecute it, during the remainder of his life, so far as other and more important avocations would permit.

Mr.-Ballantyne's constitution, which, judging from his well-set frame and capability of bodily as well as mental exertion, must have been originally a good one, was severely shattered by an attack of illness soon after his ordination at Stonehaven. He suffered ever after, from disordered digestion. Nor can it be doubted that his life of hard and almost uninterrupted study must have contributed to wear him out at a much earlier period than might otherwise have been expected. His health began visibly to decline a good while before his death. He felt very often the most excruciating inward pain, which he bore with the utmost fortitude. Change of scene and other remedial means were recommended and used, but all in vain. After a short absence from home in the summer of 1830, his wonted labours were resumed, and he persisted in them till within a week or two of his death. A short time previous to that event, he fell down in the pulpit in a faint, and was carried out by some of his people to his house. His death-bed scenes were full of humility mingled with hope. On the last day of his life, he had risen from his bed to help himself to an opiate, but fell before he could return to it ; and his attendant came into the room only in time to hear his last words pronounced with distinct and solemn emphasis,—“ I know in whom I have believed.” He died on the 5th of November, 1830, in the 52d year of his age, and the 25th of his ministry.

With the exception of a communication on the subject of Church Extension, which he sent to a religious periodical in Glasgow (the *Christian Recorder*), Mr. Ballantyne made his first appearance as an author in 1824. He published that year a pamphlet, entitled, “ A Comparison of Established and Dissenting Churches, by a Dissenter.” The sale of this pamphlet was neither rapid nor extensive. After the Voluntary-church controversy had in good earnest commenced, Mr. Ballantyne was induced to re-mould and greatly to enlarge his work, which, in its new and improved form, was published, in 1830, with the name of the author prefixed.

A discussion has lately been carried on, in some of the religious periodicals, concerning the share which Mr. Ballantyne had in originating the Voluntary-church controversy, that has for several years past engrossed so much of the public attention. From any thing that I have heard or read in the course of this discussion, I see no reason to alter the opinion which I have expressed in the account given of the Voluntary-church controversy, that “ if religious establishments in this

country are in a much more tottering condition than they formerly were, to Mr. Marshall must be awarded the honour or the blame (according to the particular view which individuals may be inclined to take of the subject) of having struck the first effectual blow." I admit that Mr. Ballantyne's publication on this subject was prior, in point of time, to any of Mr. Marshall's; but whatever influence Mr. Ballantyne's work, in its improved form, may *latterly* have had on the public mind, the impression produced by it, on its first appearance, was neither extensive nor powerful. The following statement, from a communication addressed to the writer of these pages, by an intimate friend of Mr. Ballantyne, gives upon the whole a just view of this question: "It is undeniable that it was the sermon of Mr. Marshall, followed up by his able controversial writings, that stirred extensively and powerfully the public mind on what has been termed not inaptly the 'question of questions;' and Mr. B. himself would have been the last man to have dreamed of denying this. But it would be equally preposterous to deny that Mr. B.'s work had very considerable influence in preparing the minds of many of his brethren, in the dissenting ministry more especially, for taking a prominent part intelligently, firmly, and with good effect, in the subsequent public agitation of the question."

In 1828, Mr. Ballantyne published his metaphysical speculations in a thick octavo volume, entitled, "An Examination of the Human Mind," a work of great labour and of considerable merit. Those parts of it which bear more directly on moral and theological questions are peculiarly valuable, and are well deserving of the attentive perusal of ministers of the gospel. The late Bishop Glegg of Stirling, (no mean judge of such matters,) in a letter addressed to the author, pronounced the section, which relates to human freedom, to be "by far the best thing which he had ever seen on the subject." As stated in the advertisement prefixed to the volume, "Though complete in itself, it was intended to be succeeded by others having for their object the application of the doctrines stated in it to the explanation of the more interesting intellectual, active, and moral phenomena of human nature." Sufficient materials were left by the author, at his death, to make another volume. But the sale of the first volume was so much injured (according to the statement of the publisher) by the connection of Mr. Ballantyne with the Voluntary Church controversy, that no encouragement has been given to proceed with the farther publication of the work.

The following facts, connected with the history of the publication of the "Examination of the Human Mind," are deserving of being recorded, as they are highly creditable to all the

parties concerned. When the work was ready for the press, a difficulty connected with the pecuniary "ways and means" presented itself to the author, a difficulty which, in his case, was enhanced by the confessedly uninviting nature of the subject of his intended publication. Mr. Ballantyne's manuscript was, by a mutual friend put into the hands of a gentleman possessed of wealth and of religious and literary distinction, who generously offered to run the risk of the publication; Mr. Ballantyne was truly grateful, but he was scrupulous about the possibility of involving any one, and especially one so generous, in pecuniary loss on his account. Having expressed his thanks, he allowed the matter to drop. Some time after this a very considerable sum of money was sent by the same gentleman to Mr. Ballantyne with an intimation, that it was entirely at his disposal, either to defray the expense of publishing his work, or to be devoted by him to the purposes of religious benevolence. Mr. Ballantyne, however, had by this time succeeded, or nearly so, in realizing, chiefly by great economy of his limited means, what he had ascertained to be necessary for completing an independent arrangement with an Edinburgh publisher; and the money sent him was paid over entirely to the presbytery of which he was a member, for those missionary uses which were so important in the estimation of the benevolent donor, and in his own.

Besides the publications already mentioned, Mr. Ballantyne had projected some other works on subjects connected with the church, her government and discipline, which might have appeared, had he been spared. But it was otherwise determined by Him, "in whose hand our breath is, and whose are all our ways."

#### ROBERT POLLOK, A.M.

The celebrity which the author of the "Course of Time" has acquired, entitles him to a distinguished place in this record. The poem, with which his name is so honourably associated, is alike creditable to his genius and his piety. He tuned his harp to do honour to the Saviour whom he loved; and the strains which he sung, were such as would not be unwelcome to the ears even of seraphs.

This gifted individual was born, in 1799, at Muirhouse, in the parish of Eaglesham. His father was tenant of a small farm. He received his early education at a country school. He prosecuted the study of the languages and of philosophy at the university of Glasgow, where he was distinguished for his attainments in moral science and the belles lettres. His views being directed to the office of the ministry in connection with

the Secession Church, he was admitted, after the usual presbyterial examinations, to the study of divinity under the Rev. Dr. Dick of Glasgow, who at that period was sole Professor of Divinity under the United Associate Synod. Having completed the usual course of study prescribed to the theological students of the Secession Church, he was licensed to preach the gospel, by the presbytery of Edinburgh, in the spring of 1827. He preached only three sermons in public. Symptoms of pulmonary disease began to make their appearance soon after he received licence. He had a short while before this published his "Course of Time," and the labour of preparing the poem and superintending its publication, had proved too much for his constitution. His medical advisers recommended him to spend the winter in a more genial climate, as the only probable means of preserving his life. It was resolved that he should go to Italy; and a sum of money (amounting to one hundred and seventy pounds) was raised by his friends to furnish him with the means of accomplishing the journey.

On reaching London, a consultation of medical men was held concerning his case, and they gave it as their opinion that, in his enfeebled state, he was unable to undertake such a long journey. In compliance with their advice, he took up his abode in the neighbourhood of Southampton, on Shirley Common. But his disease made rapid progress. It terminated fatally on the 15th of September, 1827. His latter end was peace. His remains were interred in the churchyard of Mill-brook. An obelisk of granite, erected by the admirers of his genius, marks the spot where his body rests in hope.

The "Course of Time," to which Pollok is indebted for his fame, is a work of real genius. When we take into the account that the whole of it was composed by him while he was yet a youth, and before his judgment could have attained to its full maturity, we are surprised, not that there should be defects in it, but that these are so few in number. His language is for the most part nervous, his imagery is rich and varied, and many of his descriptions are powerful and splendid, while a tone of well-sustained piety pervades the work from beginning to end. We here behold youthful genius doing homage to religion. The author consecrates all the energies of his mind to the best of causes, the advancement of the glory of God, and, in subordination to this, the promoting of the spiritual improvement of his fellow-men. He brings his talents and attainments, and lays them, as a free-will offering, at the foot of the cross. The great number of editions through which the poem has already passed, and the extensive circulation which it has had in every part of the

British empire, furnish the best proof of the general estimation in which its merits are held.

Besides the "Course of Time," which has procured for its author an honourable place in the list of British poets, Mr. Pollok published several productions in prose. The titles of these are, "Helen of the Glen," "Ralph Gemmell," and the "Persecuted Family." These were published prior to his poem. They appeared at first anonymously, but have latterly been collected into a small volume, under the general title of "Tales of the Covenanters," with the name of the author prefixed. They are, all of them, juvenile productions. Viewing them as such, they are no ways discreditable to the young genius that gave them birth.

REV. GEORGE PAXTON, D.D., EDINBURGH.

In giving an account of the Theological Professors of the Secession church, honourable mention has already been made of the talents and learning of the respected individual whose name is prefixed to this biographical notice. He is entitled, on account of the works which he has left behind him, to have an honourable place assigned him in the list of Secession authors.

He was born in the parish of Bolton, East Lothian, on the 2d of April, 1762. He studied the languages and philosophy at the university of Edinburgh. His theological studies were conducted under Professor Moncrieff of Alloa. He was licensed to preach the gospel on the 18th of March, 1788; and, on the 12th of August, in the following year, he was ordained to the pastoral charge of the associate (Antiburgher) congregation of Kilmaurs, in Ayrshire. Here he continued to labour till the summer of 1807, when the Theological Chair of the General Associate Synod having become vacant by the separation of Professor Bruce from the Synod, and his subsequent deposition, Mr. Paxton was appointed to fill that important situation; and the Synod having resolved that their Professor should devote his time and attention wholly to the duties of his office, the pastoral relation between Mr. Paxton and his congregation was dissolved, and his residence was transferred to Edinburgh, where the seat of the Divinity Hall was fixed.

When the union between the Burgher and Antiburgher Synods was accomplished, in September 1820, Mr. Paxton did not acquiesce in it; and, in the month of April the following year, a letter containing his resignation of the office of Professor was laid on the table of the United Associate Synod. The Synod, in accepting of Mr. Paxton's resignation, recorded "their well-founded approbation of the laborious, faithful, and

disinterested manner in which he had fulfilled his duties as Theological Tutor." A union having been effected between the protesting brethren who refused to join the United Secession church, and the "Constitutional Presbytery," which had been formed by Dr. M'Crie, Mr. Bruce, and their associates, —Mr. Paxton took the charge of the students connected with this united body. A short period before his death, he had the academical honour of Doctor in Divinity conferred upon him by the university of St. Andrews. He terminated his mortal career at Edinburgh, on the 9th of April, 1837.

His literary productions are partly poetical, and partly in prose. Besides a few single sermons, which I am unable to specify, he published, in 1801, a pamphlet entitled, "An Inquiry into the Obligation of Religious Covenants upon Posterity." In 1813, he published a volume of poems, entitled, "The Villager, and other Poems." But the work by which he is best known to the world as an author is his "Illustrations of Scripture, in three parts," which made its appearance in 1819, in two thick octavo volumes. This is a most valuable publication to the theological student. There is an immense mass of useful information, collected from a great variety of sources, brought together in it,—all tending to throw light upon Scripture. It is the result of extensive reading and of much research. A second edition of this work, with some additions, was published, in 1825, in three volumes; and a new edition of it is about to be brought out, with a memoir of the author.

#### REV. ROBERT JACK, D.D., MANCHESTER.

The subject of this short memoir was born at Glasgow, on the 12th of January, 1760. His father was an elder of the associate congregation under the superintendence of the Rev. Mr. Fisher, one of the founders of the Secession church. From his boyhood his views were directed to the office of the holy ministry, and, at the early age of eleven, he was enrolled as a student in the university of Glasgow. Having completed his college curriculum, he prosecuted the study of divinity under the venerable Brown of Haddington. He had scarcely reached the period of manhood when, after the usual probationary trials, he was licensed, by the associate presbytery of Glasgow, to preach the gospel.

Few preachers have appeared in any church who attained to a greater degree of popularity than he did. "His youthful and interesting appearance,—his judicious exposition, and powerful enforcement of the great truths of divine revelation,—his chaste and elegant composition,—his silvery eloquence,

—and his fervent manner of address,—at once attracted attention, and obtained for him universal admiration.” Very soon after being licensed, he received a call from the associate (Burgher) congregation of Linlithgow, where he was ordained toward the close of the year 1782. He continued labouring with much success in Linlithgow till the year 1794, when he was translated to Greenock. It may be mentioned, as an instance of his great popularity, that before he was removed to Greenock, he had been twice called to Leith, and twice to Edinburgh. From Greenock he was translated to Lloyd-street chapel, Manchester, where an excellent congregation was reared up under his ministry. Here he laboured for the long period of thirty-six years,—commanding the respect not only of his own flock, but of Christians of all denominations. The university of Glasgow testified their respect for his character and talents by conferring upon him the degree of Doctor in Divinity. Several years before he died he had the satisfaction of receiving, as his colleague and successor, the Rev. William M’Kerrow, who, as a son with a father, laboured with him in the gospel. After a long life, usefully spent in the service of his Master, he died on the 11th of November, 1837.

Some years after he went to Manchester he delivered a series of discourses on the Socinian controversy, which were published, and which are highly creditable to his talents and learning. A sermon which he preached before the London Missionary Society, at one of their anniversaries, and a sermon “On Evil-speaking,” constitute the only other productions of his that have been given to the world through the medium of the press.

REV. ALEXANDER PRINGLE, D.D., PERTH.

This venerable man, and exemplary minister, was born in June 1752, at Blaiklaw, in Roxburghshire. He received the elements of a classical education at the high-school of Dunse. About the fifteenth year of his age he went to the college at Edinburgh. He studied theology under Professor Moncrieff of Alloa, and was licensed to preach the gospel in 1776. Soon after licence he received a call from the congregation of Minnive, in Dumfries-shire; and, not long after this, another call was given him by the associate (Antiburgher) congregation of Perth. In this latter-mentioned place he was ordained on the 14th of August, 1777. The congregation over which he was ordained was one of the largest in the Secession, consisting probably of three thousand souls. The first time the ordinance of the Supper was dispensed, no fewer than three hundred persons applied for admission to the fellowship of the

church. Two hundred of the applicants were admitted after suitable examination. For a period of ten years after his ordination he had no colleague. On the 3d of April, 1787, the Rev. Richard Black was associated with him in the ministry. This connection continued till the period of the union between the two Secession Synods. A difference of opinion on this subject took place between Dr. Pringle and his colleague. The one was active in promoting the union, while the other was opposed to it; the consequence of which was, that the connection, which had so long subsisted between them, was formally dissolved by the presbytery in the month of November, 1820. Within less than a year after the separation of Mr. Black, the congregation gave a call to their present respected minister, the Rev. Dr. Young, who was ordained as colleague to Dr. Pringle.

The last public service, which Dr. Pringle performed, was on the forenoon of the first Sabbath of March, 1839. When he descended from the pulpit, he was more than usually exhausted and looked bilious. His disease turned out to be jaundice, beneath which his frame gradually sunk. After an illness of ten weeks, he died on the 12th of May, 1839, in the 87th year of his age, and the 62d of his ministry.

In 1781, Dr. Pringle published a useful little tract, entitled, "The duty of Prayer recommended, with some thoughts upon societies for prayer and religious conference."

In 1796, he published a larger production "On Prayer for the revival of Religion in all the Protestant churches, and for the support of the gospel among the heathen."

About twenty-seven years ago, he published a work much larger than either of the former, entitled, "A Practical View of Christ's Divine and Mediatorial Character." This volume was designed as an antidote to what he considered as "new and dangerous opinions," that were propagated about the time of its publication.

In 1838, he published a volume, entitled, "Scriptural Gleanings." This work issued from the press only nine months before the death of its author. He planned and composed the greater part of it, after he had entered on the 84th year of his age.

Since his death, there has been published a small volume, entitled, "Sermons and Letters," with a "Memoir" of the author, by the Rev. Dr. Young.

I am reluctantly obliged to draw these biographical notices of Secession authors to a close. The list is by no means exhausted. But it would swell the supplementary part of this work to an undue size, were I to give sketches of the lives of all who have appeared as authors in the Secession church.

This indeed would form an interesting volume in itself. The remaining space, allotted me, will permit me to do little more than merely mention the names of individuals who deserve to have a place assigned them in this record, either on account of the useful publications which they have left behind them, or on account of the prominent place which they occupied in the church to which they belonged.

*Mr. John Hunter*, the first licentiate of the Secession church, and minister of Gateshaw, was the author of a small volume of sermons, published after his death under the title of "The Bush burning, yet not consumed."

*Mr. James Scott*, son-in-law to Mr. Ebenezer Erskine, and who succeeded Mr. Hunter as minister of Gateshaw, published, in 1759, a controversial pamphlet, entitled, "A Brief Comparison betwixt the profession of religion made by Seceders according to the Act and Testimony, and the presently authorized profession of religion in Scotland, wherein it is shown that the one differs widely from the other, &c." The year after his death, which took place in 1773, a small duodecimo volume of discourses was published under the title of "A Collection of Sermons on various and interesting subjects."

*Mr. Potts*, who was for some time minister of Stitchell, was the author of a volume of Sermons and of some controversial tracts. He quarrelled with the Seceders, and died minister of a congregation in London.

*Mr. William Hutton*, minister of Stow (afterwards at Dalkeith), published two pamphlets, the one containing the speech which he delivered before the Antiburgher Synod, soon after its constitution, and the other a letter to Mr. Potts.

*Professor William Moncrieff* of Alloa, was the author of "Observations on a pamphlet, entitled, 'An Essay on national covenanting.'" He published also a Sermon preached by him at the opening of the Associate Synod, at Edinburgh, April 22d, 1766. The text is, Isa. viii. 16, and the title of the Sermon is, "Mercy and Judgment displayed in the effects of a gospel ministry."

*Mr. William Mair*, minister at Muckhart, was the author of a volume of Lectures.

*Mr. Bennet* of Ceres, was the author of a volume of Sermons. He published also two separate discourses, one preached before the Synod, and another preached before the presbytery.

*Mr. Alexander Shanks*, minister at Jedburgh, was a most eloquent preacher. Two volumes of his discourses have been published, at different periods. He preached and published an excellent discourse during the time of the French Revolution, for which he was offered a pension by government, but would not accept of it. His refusal was couched in the follow-

ing terms, "I am loyal from conscience—a Seceder from principle—I have done nothing more than my duty—I take no reward."

*Mr. Robert Campbell*, who was ordained in the congregation of Ebenezer Erskine at Stirling, possessed a high degree of pulpit eloquence. He was one of the committee appointed by the Associate Synod, to prepare the re-exhibition of the Testimony. He published a Sermon preached before a Missionary Society in Stirling, entitled, "The Glory of Christ displayed in the Conversion of the Heathen," and he added to it an appendix, containing "Strictures" on a pamphlet published by the Rev. Dr. Porteous of Glasgow, entitled, "New Light examined, &c."

*Mr. James Moir*, who was settled first at Cumbernauld, and was afterwards translated to Tarbolton in Ayrshire, had the reputation of being an excellent divine. He published, in 1787, an able work on "The Scripture doctrine of Redemption,"—being designed by him as an answer to "A Practical Essay on the Death of Jesus Christ, by Dr. M'Gill, one of the ministers of Ayr."—He published also "A distinct and impartial account of the Process for Socinian heresy against W. M'Gill, D.D., one of the ministers of Ayr; with Observations on his explanation and apology, and on the proceedings and final decision of the Rev. Synod of Glasgow and Ayr in that cause."

*Mr. David Walker*, minister at Pollokshaws, published a "Candid Examination" of the Rev. Mr. Hutcheson's animadversions, &c., on the subject of the Relief controversy. *Mr. James Ramsay*, who was thirty years minister of Duke Street congregation, Glasgow, engaged in the same warfare. He afterwards left the Secession and joined the Independents.

*Mr. James Wylie*, of Scone, published "A Short Dialogue between Cuphophon and Philelethes on National Covenanting."

*Mr. John Thomson*, who was some time minister at Donaghony in Ireland, and afterward at Kirkintilloch in Scotland, published several controversial pamphlets; some of which were directed against the Cameronians, and others against the New Light Seceders.

*Mr. William Fletcher*, minister at Bridge of Teith, published, in 1784, the "Scripture Loyalist" against the Cameronians. He published again in 1795, the "Scripture Loyalist Defended, &c." In 1800, he entered the lists against the Old Light Seceders, by publishing a pamphlet entitled, "The evil and danger of Schism."

*Mr. David Wilson*, minister of Bow Lane chapel, London, was the author of a volume published after his death, entitled, "Evangelical Sermons on important subjects."

*Mr. Robert Jaffray*, minister at Kilmarnock, published in 1805 an "Essay on the Reasons of Secession from the National Church of Scotland."—He published also a missionary Sermon.

*Mr. James Robertson*, minister in the same town, was a person of great learning and of extensive information. He was the author of an "Overture concerning Dr. M'Gill's errors and process, containing a warning against said errors, and the sinful proceedings of the courts in that process,"—published under the sanction of the provincial Synod of Glasgow.

*Mr. Michael Gilfillan*, a venerable minister at Dunblane, was also distinguished for his extensive reading and information. He was the author of a pamphlet, entitled, "A Warning against Socinianism"—published under the sanction of the Associate Burgher Synod in 1788.

*Mr. Clarkson*, of Ayr, ranked high as an eloquent and a popular preacher. He was called the "Whitefield of the Secession." He was followed by crowds wherever he went; and, what was far better, was honoured with tokens of ministerial usefulness. He published only one sermon from Acts xviii. 17, "And Gallio cared for none of those things."

*Mr. Robert Culbertson*, who was minister at Leith, has obtained an excellent reputation for being an able expounder of the word of God, by the Lectures which he published on the book of Revelation. 3 vols.

*Mr. Andrew Lothian*, minister of Portsburgh congregation, Edinburgh, published a small volume, entitled, "The Christian Patriot and Seaman's Friend, being Discourses and Meditations on various important subjects."

*Dr. Hugh Jameson*, of East Linton, celebrated for his classical academy, was the author of an excellent pamphlet, entitled, "Observations on the proposed union of Seceders in Scotland." The design of the pamphlet was to promote a spirit of union amongst Seceders: and after the auspicious event had taken place, he preached and published a sermon, entitled, "The sentiments and conduct suited to Seceders, in consequence of their union."

*Mr. Alexander Allan*, minister at Cupar Angus, published a controversial work on "The power of the Civil Magistrate in matters of Religion, and the nature of Covenanting."

*Mr. James Paterson*, minister at Midmar, was the author of a volume of Sermons. He published also an "Essay on Witchcraft," the design of which was to prove, that the popular superstitions on the subject are not countenanced in the Scriptures.

*Mr. Adam Blair*, minister at Ferry-port-on-Craig, has left behind him a memorial of his industry and research in a "History of the Waldenses,"—which he published in two thick octavo volumes.

*Mr. Ebenezer Brown*, of Inverkeithing, one of the most venerable and popular ministers of the Secession Church, has had his name associated with an excellent volume of Sermons published since his death.

*Mr. John Moncrieff*, who was for some time minister at Hamilton,—and who afterwards was Professor of Oriental languages in the Andersonian Institution, Glasgow,—published a dissertation “On the Antiquity and Utility of the Hebrew Vowel Points,” with an Introduction and an Appendix.

*Dr. Thomas Brown*, minister at Dalkieth, was the author of a treatise on Family Religion, and of a volume of Sermons.

*Mr. George More*, *Mr. Amos*, *Mr. Browning*, of Auchtermuchty, *Mr. Jardine*, of Langholm, *Mr. George Campbell*, of Stockbridge, *Mr. Alexander Waugh*, Miles Lane chapel, London, *Mr. James Gray*, Albion chapel, London, *Mr. Alexander Fisher*, and *Mr. Robert Brown*, both of Dunfermline, may be mentioned as authors of volumes of Sermons, or Expository Discourses. Some of these volumes were published during the lifetime of their authors, but the most of them are posthumous.

*Mr. Alexander Nisbet*, an amiable and talented young man, who died about ten months after he had been ordained minister of the congregation of Portsburgh, Edinburgh, deserves special mention to be made of him. He was a person of most extensive reading and great acquirements, and bade fair, had he been spared, to have attained to a high degree of eminence, both as a scholar and a minister. While a student of divinity, he wrote for the *Theological Magazine*, in the year 1830, a series of papers which attracted a good deal of notice. These were published separately in 1834, after his death, under the title of “The Principles of Ecclesiastical Finance deduced from an estimate of pensioned and self-supported churches,” with a Sermon on the principles and position of the Secession church, preached by him from Gal. v. 1, on the occasion of his moderating in a call at Lasswade. Soon after his death a volume of his discourses was published, with a memoir of him by the Rev. John Smart of Leith. Another volume soon made its appearance, published at the expense of his bereaved and affectionate congregation. This last volume was entitled, “Remains of the late Rev. Alexander Nisbet,” and consisted of “Essays, Lectures, and Sermons.” An enlarged memoir was prefixed to it, prepared by the Rev. Dr. Taylor of Auchtermuchty.

*Mr. William Lowrie*, of Lauder—another young minister of great promise, who was cut off in the prime of life—was the author of an able pamphlet on the church question, entitled, “The Whole Question of Ecclesiastical Establishments stated and considered.” A small volume, containing

a few of his Discourses, and a memoir of him by the Rev. Thomas Williamson of Melrose, was published after his death.

*Mr. William Smart*, of Paisley, ranked high in the estimation of his brethren as an able and most effective preacher. A volume of his sermons was published after his death, with a memoir by his son, the Rev. William Smart of Linlithgow.

*Dr. William Ferrier*, another Secession minister in Paisley, and a person of high intellectual endowments, was the author of two Discourses, one of which was preached on the occasion of the death of his colleague, the Rev. James Alyce, and the other was preached for the benefit of the Sabbath-schools of Paisley. A small volume, containing a few additional Discourses, and an interesting memoir of him by his son, the Rev. Andrew Ferrier (late of Airdrie), was published after his death.

*Dr. John Stewart*, who was settled first at Pitcairn, near Perth, and was afterwards translated to Liverpool, was the author of an excellent pamphlet on the subject of baptism. It was published by him under the title of a "Letter on the Mode of Baptism," and was addressed to a Baptist minister in the town of Liverpool, with whom he had been drawn into a controversy on this subject. He published also, in separate pamphlets, several sermons which had been preached by him on various occasions.

*Dr. George Stevenson*, minister at Ayr, in connexion with the Synod of Original Seceders, was the author of the following works: "A Dissertation on the Nature and Necessity of the Atonement," "A Plea for the Covenanted Reformation in Britain and Ireland," and "A Treatise on the Offices of Christ."

The whole of the preceding notices have a reference to authors that have finished their course, and terminated their labours upon earth. There may be individuals that deserve a place in this record, whose names and whose works I have omitted to mention. That omissions should occur in this first attempt that has been made to bring into one view the departed authors of the Secession, will not be regarded as wonderful, when it is considered that the account here given includes in it the authors that have lived during a period of more than one hundred years. The list, even though it should not be complete, will not be destitute of interest to the men of the present generation,—especially to those who are connected with the Secession church.

It is not my intention to give a complete enumeration of the *living* authors of the Secession church. The present generation of Seceders has not been less productive of authorship than any of the preceding ones; and it is not saying more than the truth warrants, when I affirm, that at least an equal amount of talent and learning has been brought to bear, by

the present race of writers, upon the subjects which they discuss in their various publications, with that which has been displayed by the authors formerly noticed.

During the last ten years, there has been one engrossing question, which has occupied a large share of the public attention, and which has agitated the empire from one extremity to the other. I refer to the Voluntary church question. The Secession ministers have undoubtedly taken the lead in the discussion of this question. It were difficult to reckon the number of publications that have been penned by them, in their attempts to enlighten the public mind concerning it. Many of these publications display a degree of talent, of learning, and research, every way worthy of the great question which they profess to discuss, and highly honourable to the authors whose pens have given them birth. Far in the front, among the writers who discuss this question, stands the Rev. Andrew Marshall of Kirkintilloch, of whose literary labours, as connected with this question, honourable mention has already been made in the preceding history. All his writings bear impressed upon them the stamp of a mind that has been cast in no ordinary mould. His style is characterized by energy, perspicuity, and terseness. He shows himself complete master of the subject which he discusses, and he brings to bear upon the discussion of it an amount of information, which can be the result only of extensive reading and of profound reflection. I must not omit mentioning, in connexion with this subject, the elegant and finished production of A. C. Dick, Esq., entitled, "Dissertation on Church Polity," a work which would do honour to any author. Nor must I pass over in silence the able and learned discourses of Dr. John Brown, of Edinburgh, on "The Law of Christ respecting civil obedience, especially in the payment of tribute," which contain a complete and masterly argument on the subject. The numerous notes appended to these discourses, extracted from a great variety of authors, render the work peculiarly valuable, as a book of reference. In connexion with this question, the following persons deserve to be mentioned, as having borne an honourable part in the discussion of it, through the medium of the press: Drs. Heugh and King of Glasgow, Thomson of Coldstream, and Young of Perth, with Messrs. Pringle of Newcastle, Harper of Leith, Marshall of Cupar Angus, and M'Kerrow of Manchester.

Among the living authors of the Secession church, Dr. John Mitchell of Glasgow, one of the Theological Professors of the United Associate Synod, holds a prominent place. He is the author of an excellent work, entitled, "An Essay on the best means of civilizing the subjects of the British Empire in India, and of diffusing the light of the

christian religion throughout the eastern world." This work was written by Dr. Mitchell when he was a young minister. Having been present at the annual distribution of prizes in the Common Hall of the college of Glasgow, on the 1st of May, 1804, he heard it publicly announced, that a prize of one hundred pounds would be given by the Rev. Claudius Buchanan, D.D., to the writer of the best essay on the subject now mentioned. He formed the resolution of entering the lists in this literary competition. In the course of that year the essay was written, and at the next annual distribution of prizes, in 1805, the sealed letter containing the name of the author was opened, in the presence of a crowded audience in the university Common Hall, and Mr. Mitchell was declared to be the successful competitor. The publication of the Essay procured literary distinction for its author, and reflected honour on the religious community to which he belonged, especially when it was known that he had carried off the palm from a considerable number of competitors, amongst whom was at least one titled dignitary, connected with the Established Church, in the city of Glasgow. Soon after the prize Essay appeared, an acquaintance commenced between the author of it and Dr. Claudius Buchanan, the gentleman by whom the competition had been proposed; and some of my readers may probably smile, when they are told that such was the opinion which this venerable person formed of the ability and information of the writer of the Essay, that he made a proposal to him, to leave his charge in Anderston, and accept of a situation which he had it in his power to procure—namely, that of being a general chaplain in the British army, which was then engaged in active operations in Portugal. It is needless to add, that the offer of the chaplaincy was declined, and that the person, to whom the offer was made, preferred the humble situation which he occupied, as a minister of the Secession Church, to a rich living in connexion with mitred episcopacy.

In connexion with the living authorship of the Secession, the following persons deserve to be mentioned. Dr. Donald Fraser, of Kennoway, has given to the world *Memoirs of Ebenezer and Ralph Erskine*; an *Essay on the Plenary and Verbal Inspiration of the Holy Scriptures*; and a variety of other useful publications. Dr. James Peddie of Edinburgh has published several excellent Sermons preached by him on various occasions. His *Answer to Dr. Porteous*, of which an account has been given in the preceding history, is one of the ablest controversial pamphlets that has ever appeared. None but a writer of first-rate talent could have produced it. The pen of Dr. John Brown of Edinburgh has been more than ordinarily prolific. In addition to the work already mentioned, he

has published *Strictures on Yates' Vindication of Unitarianism*; *Remarks on the Plans and Publications of Robert Owen*; *Discourses suited to the administration of the Lord's Supper*; besides a number of separate Sermons, and smaller publications, which show much versatility of talent and a richly furnished mind. Professor Duncan of Mid-Calder has published a *Disquisition on the Lord's Supper*, with a review of Dr. Mason's *Letters on frequent communion*; *A Summary View of the revealed plan of providence*; and an *Essay on the Being of a God, the origin of moral evil, and the anomalies of Providence*; with several Sermons preached on various occasions. Dr. James Stark of Denny Loanhead has published one of the best volumes of Sermons that has appeared in the Secession Church. Dr. William Schaw of Ayr is the author of an excellent volume of Sermons. The Rev. David Paterson of Alnwick is the author of some able discourses. Dr. Adam Thomson of Coldstream has long been favourably known to the public, as a useful and instructive writer, both by his *Comparative View of Dissenters*, and by his volume of Sermons, of which a new and enlarged edition has lately appeared. Dr. Henry Thomson of Penrith is the author of a volume of *Lectures on Selected passages from the Acts of the Apostles*; also a volume of *Sacramental Addresses*; and has translated from the French a work by M. Duvoisin on the *Evidences of Christianity*. Dr. George Young of Whitby has written some able works on Geology; and is the author of a small volume of expository discourses on the Book of Jonah. The Rev. John Young of Albion Chapel, London, has published a volume of *Lectures on the chief points in controversy between Protestants and Roman Catholics*.

The Rev. David Robertson of Kilmaurs has published three volumes of expository discourses on the book of Revelation. Dr. William Brown of Edinburgh has given to the world an interesting *History of Missions*. The Rev. John Newlands of Perth, and the Rev. George Gilfillan of Dundee, have published, each, a small volume of discourses. The Rev. William Pringle of Auchterader has given an excellent translation of Calvin's *Commentaries on the Epistles to the Galatians and Ephesians*. As writers of *Biographical Works*, or of introductory "*Memoirs*," I may mention the names of the Rev. Dr. Hay of Kinross—the Rev. Andrew Ferrier, late of Airdrie,—Rev. John M'Farlane, Laurieston, Glasgow—Rev. William M'Kelvie, Balgedie—Rev. James Gilfillan, Stirling—Rev. David Smith, Biggar—Rev. John Smart, Leith—Rev. Dr. Taylor, Auchtermuchty—Rev. John Johnston, Limekilns—Rev. William Smart, Linlithgow—Rev. Thomas Williamson, Melrose—and the Rev. Dr. Young, Perth. Before conclud-

ing this literary survey, I must not omit mentioning the name of the Rev. Robert Wilson of Greenock, who has acquired fame to himself, as a successful wooer of the Muses. His "Pleasures of Piety," of which a new and enlarged edition, in ten books, has lately appeared, is a most pleasing and instructive poem.

Were I to mention the names of all the ministers who have published single Sermons, or small treatises,—some of which display much talent, and are highly creditable to their authors,—I could greatly enlarge the list of persons who have done honour to the Secession by their useful publications. But I have already extended my account to a greater length than I originally intended; and I do not wish to exhaust the patience of my readers, by being insufferably prolix.

My object in this supplementary part of the work, has been to remove an impression, which has existed to a considerable extent (though probably it does not now exist to the same extent) in the minds of persons who are ignorant of the history of Dissenters, that the ministers connected with the Secession Church, and with Dissenting communities generally, are uneducated and illiterate men. With regard to other dissenting communities, it is not my intention to say any thing. I shall leave it to those who are connected with them to vindicate their own cause. But in the preceding pages, I have furnished ample evidence to show, that the ministers of the Secession church are neither uneducated nor illiterate. All of them receive a liberal education. They enjoy exactly the same means which the ministers connected with the Establishment possess for attaining to eminence in any of the walks of literature; and, presuming that they possess the same natural capacity for the acquisition of learning which ministers of the Established church do, there is no reason for regarding them as, in any respects, their inferiors. During the last hundred years the ministers of the Secession have contributed, by their writings, at least an equal amount (making allowance for the smallness of their numbers) to the stores of theology, history, philology, poetry, and the various departments of useful learning, that the ministers of the Established church have done; while they have, as a body, been eminently distinguished for their unremitting diligence and laborious exertions in communicating religious instruction to the people. May they continue in time to come, as they have done in time past, to deserve well of their country; and may their personal improvement, in the various branches of useful knowledge, keep pace with the growing spirit of the age, and with the increased demands of the church!

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